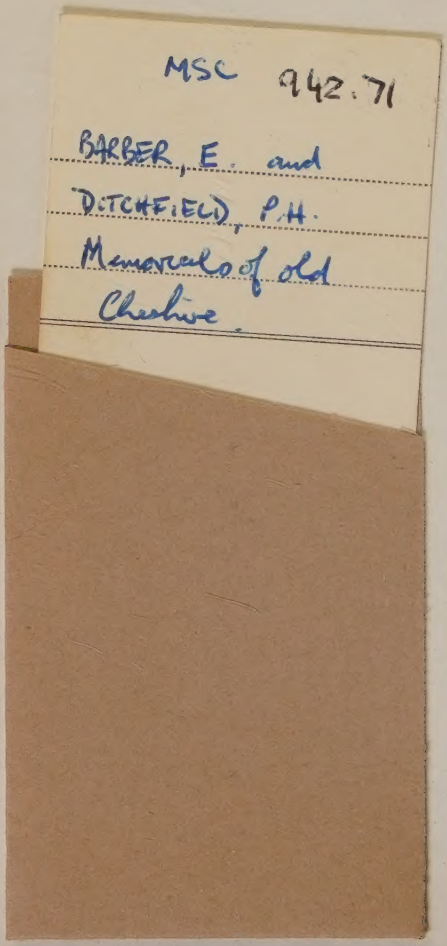
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MEMORIALS OF THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND

General Editor:
REV. P. H. DITCHFIELD, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.S.L., F.R.Hist.S.

MEMORIALS OF OLD CHESHIRE

GEORGE ALLEN & SONS
PUBLISHERS
LONDON
RUSKIN HOUSE

Chester Castle, Barracks, and Courts.

MEMORIALS OF OLD CHESHIRE

EDITED BY

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AND

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"The Cathedral Churches of Great Britain," "English Villages," "The Parish Clerk," &c.

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO THE

MOST NOBLE

THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER

LORD-LIEUTENANT OF THE

COUNTY OF CHESHIRE

THIS VOLUME

IS

DEDICATED

BY HIS GRACE'S KIND PERMISSION

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PREFACE

THE Editors desire to express their grateful thanks to those who have co-operated with them, and have contributed papers for this volume. Their only regret is that the limits of space prevented them from inviting the assistance of others, and thus of including other subjects, which, it may be, some readers would expect to find here.

But wide as the range is, it is manifestly impossible in a volume of this size to cover the whole ground. It does not profess to be a complete history, or to give *all* those memories of the past which ought to be of interest to those of the present day. Perhaps no county is richer in these treasures than the county of Chester, and every corner of it has its own special ones. The city of Chester gives its title to the heir to the Crown, as the Prince of Wales is always Earl of Chester; and that fact in itself gives a dignity and importance to both city and county. Then, as will be pointed out in some of the papers which follow, as a County Palatine, Cheshire had privileges and rights of a peculiar character, and all this has made the task of selection of subjects to be treated of more difficult, and the reader will doubtless sympathise with the Editors, even though he may not altogether approve of the result of their labours, and may lament certain omissions.

Some memorials of old Cheshire will be presented to the mind and eyes of many in the Historic Pageant which is to take place in July, and will give further proof of the wealth of material from which selection had to be made. We may hope that both this volume and the Pageant will have

an educative effect, in that they will lead residents in the county, and the rising generation in particular, to take a growing and intelligent interest in its history. This may be done either in the small and confined space of the parish in which they live, or in the wider sphere of the neighbourhood, or of the county as a whole. And it can be done by individual search and inquiry, and by association with the Societies which foster and promote such studies as conduce to the creation of a greater interest in the story of the past, and in the preservation of the objects which will keep it alive.

We have to thank the Chester and North Wales Archæological and Historic Society for the loan of some illustrations, and are only sorry that more could not be inserted. We have photographs from Dr. Elliott, Mr. F. Simpson, Mr. G. W. Haswell, and others, some admirable drawings by Mr. C. H. Minshull, whilst His Honour Sir Horatio Lloyd has permitted us to reproduce a sketch of his of the old High Cross at Chester.

We were fortunate to secure the services of so busy a man as Professor J. C. Bridge, M.A., F.S.A., for two of the papers, both of which will be found most instructive, dealing as they do with distinctive peculiarities of the county, and giving evidence of full and wide knowledge of the subjects treated of. To one and all, named and unnamed, we tender our cordial thanks, and trust that the present volume may be regarded as a not unworthy successor of those in the same series which have preceded it.

EDWARD BARBER.
P. H. DITCHFIELD.

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CONTENTS

Historic Cheshire	By P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.	1
The County Palatine of Chester: its Place in History	By Henry Taylor (Chester), F.S.A.	19
The Abbeys of Cheshire	By the Archdeacon of Chester	33
Cheshire Castles	By the Archdeacon of Chester	50
The Timber-framed Churches of Cheshire	By the Rev. Dr. Cox, LL.D., F.S.A.	61
The Walls and Rows of Chester	By the Archdeacon of Chester	70
The Half-timbered Architecture of Cheshire	By C. H. Minshull	80
An Old Consistory Court	By the Archdeacon of Chester	100
Halton Court Leet	By V. B. Davies	106
Cheshire Worthies	By P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.	114
The Four Randle Holmes of Chester (an Epitome of a Paper by the late J. P. Earwaker, F.S.A.)	By the Archdeacon of Chester	133
The Chester Mystery Plays	By Joseph C. Bridge, M.A., Mus. Doc. Oxon. et Dunelm, F.S.A.	142

The Siege of Chester . . .	By the ARCHDEACON OF CHESTER . . .	180
Cheshire and its Families . .	By JAMES HALL . .	194
Some Cheshire Crosses . .	By the ARCHDEACON OF CHESTER . . .	207
Echoes from Farndon . .	By the late Rev. L. E. OWEN	218
Some Cheshire Customs, Proverbs, and Folk-lore . .	By JOSEPH C. BRIDGE, M.A., Mus. Doc. Oxon. et Dunelm, F.S.A. . .	230
Two Cheshire Saints . . .	By the ARCHDEACON OF CHESTER . . .	264
INDEX		277

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chester Castle, Barracks, and Courts . . . . *Frontispiece*
(*From a photograph by F. Frith & Co. Ld.*)

PAGE, OR FACING PAGE

View of the City of Chester 16
(*From an old engraving*)

Hugh Lupus and his Parliament 22

The Old Shire Hall, Chester 32

Norman Doorway in Cloisters, Chester Cathedral . . . 38
(*From a photograph by F. Simpson*)

Cloisters, Chester Cathedral 40
(*From a photograph by F. Simpson*)

Norman Chambers, Chester Cathedral Cloisters . . . 42
(*From a photograph by F. Simpson*)

Doorway in Cloisters, Chester Cathedral 44
(*From a photograph by F. Simpson*)

Old Shotwick Castle 52
(*From an old engraving; photograph by F. Simpson*)

Beeston Castle 56
(*From an old engraving*)

Old Gateway, Chester Castle 58
(*From an old engraving; photograph by F. Simpson*)

Marton Church 62
(*From a photograph by H. E. Tonge*)

Old Warburton Church 64
(*From a photograph by H. E. Tonge*)

Siddington Church 66
(*From a photograph by H. E. Tonge*)

Bruera Church, near Chester 68

Bonewaldesthorne's Tower 72
(*From a photograph by F. Simpson*)

King Charles's Tower 74
(*From a photograph by F. Simpson*)

PAGE, OR FACING PAGE

Watergate Row, Chester 76
(From a photograph by F. Simpson)

Bishop Lloyd's Palace, Watergate Row 78
(From a photograph by F. Simpson)

Baggily Hall; Section through Large Hall 85

Interior of the Hall, Baggily Hall, Cheshire 85

Almshouses, Commonhall Lane, Chester 86

Almshouses, Commonhall Lane, Chester 87

Bramhall, the Porch (East End) 89

Bramhall, a Corner of the South Wing 90

Moreton Old Hall, Gatehouse 92

Moreton Hall, in the Courtyard 93

Broxton Hall, Part Elevation of Gable 96

House, Whitefriars, Chester 98

Consistory Court, Chester Cathedral 102
(From block lent by Chester and North Wales Archæological Society; photograph by F. Simpson)

Halton Castle 106
(From an old engraving by S. Buck)

Sir Hugh Calveley's Tomb, Bunbury Church 116
(From block lent by Chester and North Wales Archæological Society; photograph by J. Elliott, M.D.)

Old Lamb Row 138
(From an old drawing by Cuitt; photograph by F. Simpson)

Tabley House and Chapel 198
(From an old engraving)

The High Cross, Chester 208
(From block lent by Chester and North Wales Archæological Society; drawing by His Honour Sir Horatio Lloyd)

Base of Old Village Cross, Eaton, near Tarporley . . . 212
(From a photograph by G. W. Haswell)

Sandbach Crosses 214
(From block lent by Chester and North Wales Archæological Society)

Farndon Bridge 220
(From a photograph by F. Simpson)

Facsimile of Speed's Autograph 229

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HISTORIC CHESHIRE

By P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.

BRIGHT and fair is the Cheshire land and well renowned in story. It is one of the most famous counties in England, and can raise its head proudly above other less noted shires. It rejoices in being a County Palatine, its Earls in former days having sovereign jurisdiction within its precincts. The Earls of Chester held their own Parliaments, summoned the barons and tenants to the conclave, and Acts of Parliament passed by English houses of representatives had no force within the Palatinate of Cheshire. It had its own courts of justice for determining all pleas of land, tenements, contracts, felonies, &c. It was an *imperium in imperio*, and though Lancashire and Durham claimed similar privileges of Palatinate, their County Palatines were established later than that of Chester and were not so well settled, nor their powers and privileges so clearly defined. For a brief space Cheshire was a Principality, and Richard II. styled himself *Princeps Cestriæ*, and it can still boast of having a Prince for its Earl, the title of Earl of Chester being always borne since the reign of King Henry III. by the eldest son of the kings of England.

Famous, too, is the county for its illustrious sons. Speed, a Cheshire man, who ought therefore to know well the truth of his statements, though perhaps for that reason a little partial, says: "The shire may well be said to be a seedplot of Gentilitie, and the producer of many most ancient and worthy families; neither hath any brought more men of valour into the Field than Cheeseshire hath done, who,

by a generall speech, are to this day called The Chiefe of men; and for nature's endowments (besides their noblenesse of mindes) may compare with any other nation in the world; their limmes strait and well-composed; their complexions faire, with a cheerfull countenance; and the Women of a grace, feature and beautie, inferior unto none."

Verily, Master Speed was a patriotic son, but he was not far from the truth. Cheshire men have had their detractors, as who have not? These scurrilous, envious persons have dared to frame this distich:

> "Cheshire born and Cheshire bred,
> Strong i' th' arm and weak i' th' yed."

It sounds like a taunt thrown across the border of my native county of Lancashire. Strong i' th' arm Cheshire men have ever been, as the story of many a fight and foray in which they have gallantly played their part has effectually told, but the long line of Cheshire worthies serves to prove that their heads are not weaker than those of their neighbours. If you need a further testimony to their excellences, you can refer to the sixteenth-century Cheshire tourist, who wrote of them: "They are of a stomach, stout, bold, and hardy; of stature tall and mighty; withall impatient of wrong, and ready to resist the enemy or stranger that shall invade their countrey; the very name whereof they cannot abide, and namely, of a Scot." Possibly they have since that time seen fit to modify their dislike of the gentlemen from across the Tweed, who are said by a modern critic "to keep the Sabbath and everything else they can lay their hands on."

The story of the shire presents many features of unique interest. Its proximity to Wales rendered it the field of many a wild fight between the sturdy Cheshire men and the warlike Welsh folk, and required the possession of a powerful garrison. The port of Chester was the chief place of embarkation for troops, which the turbulent Irishmen often needed for the preservation of peace, and Briton,

Saxon, Dane, and Norman have left traces behind them of their presence in the county.

Before the advent of the Romans the district was inhabited by a warlike British tribe called Cornavii, whose territory embraced most of the counties on the Welsh border. They were a strong and martial people, who gave much trouble to the Roman conquerors, and required a formidable company of legionaries to keep them in order. The Romans firmly established themselves on the banks of the Dee, or Deva as they called the river. They knew well the district of Great Meols, where many coins and *fibulæ* have been discovered, but their great stronghold was Chester. The discoveries of Roman remains in the city are so important that no other place in the kingdom can rival it, and most of these have been found during the last twenty-two years. Built into the Roman city wall were found a large number of inscribed, sculptured, or moulded stones, probably taken from the Roman cemetery, erected in memory of the soldiers who fought in Roman legions. They establish some interesting historical facts. First, we gather from a stone erected to the memory of a soldier, whose name is lost, that the legionaries were here in the earliest years of the Roman conquest of Britain, about A.D. 50. The conquerors pushed along the old Watling Street, which led to the Dee, and must have established themselves there very soon after their advent to Britain. Secondly, we learn that Chester was the permanent quarters of two special legions, Legio II., Adiutrix Pia Fidelis, and Legio XX., Valeria Victrix. Nearly all the inscriptions relate to soldiers of one or other of these troops. When the Second Legion was withdrawn to defend the Danube frontier, the Twentieth remained to guard the Chester country, and sent contingents to protect the forts of Manchester and North Wales. From the fact that these memorial stones of Roman soldiers were afterwards taken from the cemetery and built up in the Roman wall of the city, Dr. Haverfield has determined that the

Roman wall of Chester was built in the latter part of the second century or in the commencement of the third century. But we must leave the inviting subject of the Roman antiquities of Chester to another chapter.

It must have been a noble place in Roman times, with its walls and streets and houses replete with the usual fittings with which the Romans used to love to surround themselves. It was a great centre of traffic, situated on the Watling Street that ran from Richborough, through Chester to Anglesea, and through Chester to Manchester, York, and Carlisle. Suetonius pitched his camp at Chester, and Claudius Cæsar and the Emperor Galba are said to have visited it. The existence of Julius Cæsar's Tower will doubtless suggest to the "raw antiquary" mentioned below a visit of the illustrious conqueror.

When the Roman legions were withdrawn to defend the centre of the Empire, the British remained masters of the country as far as the Picts and Scots would permit. Cheshire is far from Kent, where soon the dreaded Teutonic races made their appearance, and established their rule over the enfeebled Britons. The country of the Deeside remained at peace. Caer-Leon, or Caer Leon Vaur[1] as the Britons called it, heard only the smooth-tongued tones of Celtic speech, and nothing disturbed its quietude, as far as is known, until in A.D. 613 the fury of war burst upon the British people. Christianity had taught them many holy lessons of faith. Wales, with Cheshire, was a land of saints. Bede tells us that the monastery of Bangor, which may have been the Christian Banchor, about 15 miles from Chester, "flourished with learned men at the coming of Augustine." SS. David, Asaph, and Padern all flourished after the Saxons had occupied England, and the sixth

[1] The imagination of the Celtic mind has made Chester the Neomagus, founded by Magus, son of Samothes, son of Japheth, 240 years after the Flood. They say a giant named Leon Vaur, a conqueror of the Picts, built a city here, which was afterwards beautified by two British princes, Caerleid and Caerleir. But, concludes the chronicler, "they are but raw antiquaries that will give credit to such relations."

century saw, not only the foundation of the Welsh bishoprics, but also of the great Welsh monasteries, which were the especial glory of the Church in Wales. But the British Christians liked not Augustine, his haughty ways, and his new-fangled customs, and at a council refused subjection. So Augustine waxed wroth, and said that "if they would not preach the way of life to the English, they should at their hands undergo the vengeance."

A terrible storm did burst upon the unhappy people. The heathen King Ethelfrid of Northumbria came down upon the fair land of Cheshire, defeated the Britons, captured and destroyed Chester. The monks of Bangor came in crowds to the battle to offer prayers for the success of their countrymen, and nearly 1200 of them were slaughtered. Bede, with his Roman leanings, sees in this slaughter the execution of the Divine judgment and a fulfilment of Augustine's prophecy—a suggestion unworthy of the pious historian. If the Divine wrath was turned upon the people of Cheshire and the monks, it was soon dispelled. Ethelfrid's triumph was of short duration. Soon the gallant Welsh princes raised an army, marched on Chester, defeated the Northumbrian King with great slaughter, and elected Cadwan King of Wales at Chester.

For more than a century Cheshire remained under British rule, but stronger grew the Saxon power, when the rival kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex had settled their quarrels; and in A.D. 828 King Egbert came to Cheshire, captured the city, and made the country parts of the Mercian kingdom. This Mercian kingdom embraced a large extent of country, and was not divided into shires until the beginning of the tenth century. The older counties—Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hants, Wilts, Berkshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Middlesex, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk—some of them representing old kingdoms, are known to have existed as dèfined districts in the ninth century. In these the shire is not named after the chief town except in Hants; but when, in A.D. 912, Mercia was divided, each shire took

its name from the county town. Thus we have Stafford-shire, Worcester-shire, and others, and Chester-shire or Cheshire. The county then assumed the concrete shape and size which it has since preserved.

At the end of the ninth century came the first visit of those dread marauders, the Danes, who carried fire and sword through so many fair regions of England. From Northumberland they swooped down on the fields of Cheshire, led by the sea-king Hastings, and "arrived at a western city in Wirall which is called Lega-ceaster. Then were the forces [of King Alfred] unable to come up with them before they were in the fortress; nevertheless they beset the fortress about for some two days, and took all the cattle that were there without, and slew the men whom they were able to take without the fortress, and burned all the corn, and with their horses ate it every morning."[1] The Danes liked not this, and were reduced to eating horse-flesh, and were glad to leave the country and escape to North Wales. The *Saxon Chronicle* tells us nothing more of the visits of the Danes. Higden mentions that at the close of the tenth century the county was laid waste by pirates, doubtless the sea-rovers, the Danes, but the evidence of names proves that the Danes were firmly established in the shire as settlers. By the Peace of Wedmore in A.D. 878, they won from Alfred all the country east and north of Watling Street, including the greater part of Cheshire. Indications of their presence are not so strong as in Lancashire, but these are sufficiently plain to show they partially colonised the country. There is a church at Chester dedicated to St. Olave, a Scandinavian king and saint, to whom the Danish colony in London dedicated a church (Tooley Street in London is, of course, a corruption of St. Olaf's Street). All names ending in *by* are Danish, of which we have Kirby, Pensby, Irby, Frankby, Greasby. That the Danes were Christians is proved by such names as Kirby,

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, A.D. 892; according to other authorities, 894.

Kirkdale, Crosby. But the most remarkable memorial of all is the name Thingwall, the place where the Folkmote or Thing met. It is surrounded by several other villages with Scandinavian names on the small tongue of land between the Dee and the Mersey. Sometimes a Celtic name is met with, which has survived amid the Saxon and Danish population, such as Meols, Dove, Llandican, and Inch. Further inland Saxon names predominate, such as Bebington, Oldfield, Woodchurch, Upton.

Over the poor remains of Mercia that remained to Alfred's rule he set the Ealdorman Æthelred, the husband of his daughter Æthelflœd, or Ethelfleda, a ruler well fitted for his courage to guard against the inroads of the Danes. He rebuilt Chester, which had been ruinated by the wars. On his death the government devolved on his spirited widow of whom Henry of Huntingdon says:

> "O potent Ethelfleda, terrible to men,
> Whom courage made a king, nature a queen."

She built a town or fortress at Eddisbury in the forest of Delamere, and another at Runcorn. The English power grew stronger in the land. In 920 King Edward the Elder built the city Thelwall on the Mersey, and placed a garrison there. King Edgar was at Chester in 973, and received the homage of eight petty kings, or chieftains, Kenneth III. of Scotland, Malcome of Cumberland, Macon of the Isle of Man, James of Galloway, Howell of North Wales, Owen of South Wales, and two joint rulers, Sfreth of South Wales and Inkil of Cumberland. Ralph Higden, the monk of Chester, relates a story of his having been rowed by them from his palace to the Church of St. John, and Dean Howson, when speaking of this church, said:

"As regards the historical associations, it should be observed in the first place that the water in front of the church is that reach of the river Dee over which the Saxon King Edgar was rowed in 973 by eight British chieftains. His landing place is on the rocky ground immediately under the church, and from the church, on looking down the river towards the old bridge, can be seen the starting point of that short but very expressive voyage. The picturesque

little chapel among the foliage is also connected by tradition with Saxon history. It is said that Harold, having 'lost hys lefte eye' in the battle of Hastings, 'yescaped to the countrey of Chester and lived there holylie in St. James's cell, fast by Saynt John's Church.'"

This last is, of course, pure legend, but the story of the wonderful rowing seems to be fully accepted by the Dean, and is not scoffed at by most Cheshire historians.

When Cnut the Dane ruled over English land, he committed the government of this part of Mercia to certain chief men with the dignity of Earl, who were styled Earls of Chester. Only three of these ruled during the closing years of the Anglo-Saxon period—Leofric, the son of Leofwin; Algar, the son of Leofric; and Edwin, son of Edgar. Then the Normans came, and many changes took place in the Cheshire land. The Conqueror confiscated the estates of the Saxon gentlemen and nobility, and bestowed them upon his Norman adventurers and followers. He gave the Earldom of Chester to Gherbod, a noble of Flanders; but he was compelled to go to his native land, was seized by his enemies, and retained a prisoner. So the King gave the title to Hugh Lupus, son of the Viscount of Avranches, his sister's son, a valiant soldier, whose efforts were much needed to restrain the tumultuous Welsh. He gave to the Earl a Palatinate jurisdiction and sovereign power, to be held under the King in the province over which he ruled. These are the terms of the grant:

"Tenere totum hunc comitatum sibi et heredibus suis ita liberè ad gladium ut ipse Rex tenebat Angliæ coronam."

Hugh Lupus had several barons to assist him in council. These were Nigel his cousin, Baron of Halton, Constable and Marshal of Chester; Sir Pierce Malbane, Baron of Nantwich; Robert Fitzhugh, Baron of Malpas; Robert de Vernon, Baron of Shipbrook; Hamon Massey, Baron of Dunham; Walter de Pointon, Baron of Stockport; and Eustace Crew de Montalt, Baron of Hawarden.

The stark Earl was as good a Christian as he was a soldier. He sought the advice of the saintly Anselm, and

sent for him from Normandy to Chester, and so brought to England its future Archbishop of Canterbury. By his counsel Earl Hugh converted the Nunnery of St. Werburgh into an Abbey, replacing the nuns by monks of the Benedictine Order. His Welsh neighbours caused endless trouble. He built a castle at Halton, and gave the barony to Nigel, on condition that he should be Constable of Chester, and by the service of leading the vanguard of the Earl's army whenever he should march into Wales.

The history of Cheshire during the two centuries after the coming of the Normans is a record of the incursions of the Welsh, and of the continued attempts of the English to resist them. The country was reduced to a deplorable condition. The Welsh raided and ravaged the lands next their borders. English armies came to Cheshire, consumed the produce of the farms, and often burned the corn and killed the live-stock lest the Welsh should seek for plunder. Many of these raids find no place in history; only those are recorded which were attended by startling results. We can mention only a few of them. In 1093 they came, led by Griffith ap Conan, and made great slaughter. They fought a great battle at Nantwich during the rule of Hugh Lupus. In 1121 they made a raid and burned two castles, Shocklach and Malpas, celebrated for its bad road. In 1150 they came again, but were cut off on their return at Nantwich. King Henry II. in 1156 came with an army and encamped on Saltney Marsh. Ten years later he came by sea with an army to Chester, determining to crush the Welsh by invading their territory; but his heart failed him, and he abandoned the enterprise. In 1212 these terrible Welshmen took castles, killed the garrisons, burned several towns, and returned home rejoicing laden with plunder. King John marched to Chester determined to punish these outrageous folk who loved fighting, but he had certain troubles with his barons which need not be here chronicled; and being assured that if he marched against the foe he would be either assassinated or handed over to the tender

mercies of the marauders, he preferred to hie him back to London. Matthew Paris, the old chronicler, tells us much about these terrible doings—how in 1245 Henry III. tried in vain to conquer them, and then caused a fearful famine in Cheshire by destroying all the corn and produce, including the salt pits, lest the Welsh should gain plunder; how again in 1256 the Welsh invaded the country and ravaged it to the very gates of the city, and by way of reminder repeated the process in the next year. Even the stark Prince Edward they defeated, and King Henry came himself with a mighty army to reduce them to order. He adopted the usual tactics of burning the provisions of the poor Cheshire farmers, and was thus hoist on his own petard, as his army could not find food, and the expedition was abandoned. Then James, Lord Audley, who on returning from abroad found his castles burnt and his retainers slaughtered, being mightily enraged, marched into Wales to slay these terrible folk. He killed many, but he might as well have tried to sweep back the waves that beat on the Wirral shore. The pertinacious foe only retaliated and attacked his lands again. And so the fight went on backwards and forwards, houses and castles being burnt, men and women slain, crops destroyed, until the whole county was reduced to a howling, desolate wilderness. The duel between Prince Llewellyn and Edward I. is well known. The King brought an army to Chester; the Prince sued for peace, and the expedition was abandoned. In 1274 the King summoned Llewellyn to a conference at Chester, which invitation the Prince, perhaps wisely, declined. Instead of coming to a conference, he made inroads and plundered the country. Then Edward in 1277 marched with a vast army to Chester. He cut great avenues through the forests, so as to protect his men from ambuscades. He marched into Wales in triumph. Llewellyn made his submission, but this did not prevent him from renewing his inroads four years later. At last he was killed in a skirmish by Lord Mortimer, and the land had rest. Edward gave to his

infant son, born at Carnarvon, the title of Prince of Wales, and peace at length descended on the hills and vales of Cheshire which for two hundred years had been complete strangers to it.

Our chronicle of the Welsh wars and plunderings has carried us far afield, and we must hark back to the line of Earls who ruled over the harassed Palatinate. When Hugh Lupus died without issue, the Earldom descended to Ranulph Bohun, who married his sister, Margaret. He took for his arms three wheat sheaves or in a field azure, which are the present arms of the city. He was succeeded by his son, Hugh de Bohun, in 1152, who foolishly joined the rebellious Prince Henry against his father Henry II., and was sent a prisoner to Normandy. Ranulph III. succeeded, and earned the title of "the Good." He founded several abbeys, fought in the Crusades, and drove the Dauphin Lewis out of England, who had come to depose King John.

During the Wars of the Barons against Henry III., a battle was fought between the Earl of Derby and a large force for the barons against the royal army led by William, Lord Zouche, David, brother to Llewellyn, and John, Lord Audley, when the Earl was victorious and Chester was captured in 1264. John, Earl of Chester, adopted a novel expedient to end the Welsh invasions. He married Helena, the daughter of Llewellyn, during an interval of peace in order to confirm it. But the lion and the lamb might as well have mated, and the wild turbulent Princess proved a strange bride. History records not the differences of that ill-assorted alliance. Perhaps he tried to tame her too severely. Perhaps he was but a faint-hearted Petruchio. At any rate she poisoned him, and, leaving no children, the King took the Earldom into his own hands and gave it to his eldest son, Prince Edward. When this Prince was captured by Simon de Montfort, he was forced to relinquish the Earldom as part of his ransom, but on the triumph of the King's forces it reverted again to the Crown.

Richard II., in his troubles with the barons, chose a bodyguard of 2000 Cheshire men, so trusting was he in their loyalty and bravery. As a reward for their fidelity he made the county a Principality by Act of Parliament, styling himself *Princeps Cestriæ*, as we have already noticed. This honour the county did not long enjoy, as Henry of Lancaster revoked the Act. Not all the men of Cheshire were loyal to Richard, or were perhaps wearied of him. When the storm burst some of them, including Sir Richard and Sir John Legh, went over to Henry's side. He came to Chester and raised an army there, and executed Sir Piers Legh, who had remained faithful to Richard. Soon the men of Chester saw the stern Duke of Lancaster marching into the city, and behind him rode their unfortunate King, a prisoner in the hands of one who knew no pity, and soon to be done to death at Pontefract Castle. Reports were circulated that Richard was still alive. In 1403 the Earl of Northumberland and Lord Percy, commonly called "Hotspur," conspired against Henry IV. and ordered the news that Richard was living to be proclaimed throughout the county, stating that he could be seen at Chester Castle. The Cheshire men rallied to their old adherence, and readily joined the standard of the Northumbrian Earl. Every one knows the result of the fatal fight fought within sight of Chester walls, when most of the knights and squires, the flower of Cheshire chivalry, lay dead on the stricken field. Woeful was the day for Cheshire men. Henry captured the Baron of Kinderton and Sir Richard Vernon, and beheaded them. Even some who fought on the King's side fell in battle, including Sir John Calveley and Sir John Massey. Moreover, the stern Henry was wroth against the county, and every man felt that his head was in jeopardy. But in the following year the King was pleased to pardon the county, and extracted a fine of 300 marks from the city.

The valour of Cheshire men has shone forth on many

a battlefield. Look at that gallant feat of arms at the battle of Poictiers, when Lord Audley and his four Cheshire knights, Sir John Delves, Sir Thomas Dutton, Sir Robert Foulhurst, and Sir John Hawkstone won for themselves undying fame. Sir Piers Legh of Macclesfield, from whom are descended the Leighs of Lyme, had the lordship of that place granted to him for taking the Count of Tankerville prisoner. He was afterwards slain at Agincourt. But in our unhappy Civil Wars the good gentlemen of Cheshire were never a united body. They espoused different causes, ranged themselves under different banners, and so fought against each other and slew each other. It was so in Richard's time. It was so at Blore Heath in 1459, when neighbour fought with neighbour and many fell, amongst whom were Sir Thomas Dutton, Sir John Done, Sir Hugh Venables, Sir Richard Molineux, Sir William Troutbeck, Sir John Legh of Booths, and Sir John Egerton. Thus does Drayton sing of this unhappy slaughter :—

> "Then Dutton Dutton kills; and Done doth kill a Done;
> A Booth a Booth; and Leigh by Leigh is overthrown;
> A Venables against a Venables doth stand,
> A Troutbeck fighteth with a Troutbeck hand to hand:
> Then Molineux doth make a Molineux to die;
> And Egerton the strength of Egerton doth try.
> Oh Cheshire! wert thou mad of thine own native gore,
> So much until this day thou never shedd'st before!
> Above two thousand men upon the earth were thrown,
> Of whom the greatest part were naturally thine own."

Again, on Flodden Field, the valour of the Cheshire men was proved. Macclesfield had cause to weep over the slaughter of her sons, including her brave mayor, Sir Edmund Savage. Again, in the Scottish War, in 1544, they showed their fighting powers; of the sixty men knighted at Leith, one-third were gallant Cheshire men.

Before we close this account of the mediæval period, we notice the shire studded with fine towns and villages, fine churches, and noble monasteries. Of these we may mention the Monastery of St. Werburgh, founded by Hugh Lupus at

Chester; and the smaller houses of St. John for secular canons, of St. Francis, a Franciscan monastery founded by King John and suppressed by Cardinal Wolsey for the founding of his college at Oxford; and the Nunnery of St. Mary, founded by Earl Ranulph. At Birkenhead there was a priory of Black Canons founded by Hano de Massey, Earl of Derby, and dedicated to SS. Mary and James. At Combermere there was a house of White Monks founded in 1134 by Hugo Maltana. At Dernhall was a Cistercian house, founded by Edward I. in performance of a vow which he made for a deliverance at sea. This was afterwards removed to Vale Royal, and became a large monastery with a hundred Cistercian monks, and was valued at £32,000. It was consecrated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, with the Bishop of Durham and many other prelates. Another Cistercian monastery was founded by Robert Pincerna in 1153 at Poulton, and then removed to Dentacres. A Collegiate Church was established at Macclesfield by Thomas Savage, Archbishop of York, in 1508. He was born at that place, and this showed his affection for it. His death prevented him from finishing it, but his heart was buried there. Mobberley Abbey of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine was founded by Patrick de Mobberley; a Priory at Norton by William, son of Nigel, Constable of Chester. He founded also one at Runcorn in 1133, but afterwards removed it to Norton. Stanlaw Abbey was founded in 1172 by John de Lacy, Constable of Chester, but it was afterwards removed to Whalley, where the fine ruins testify to its former magnificence.

Such were the principal monastic houses in the county which the decree of ruthless Henry VIII. doomed to destruction. Chester was one of the sees founded by him out of the spoils of the monasteries, together with Bristol, Oxford, Westminster, Gloucester, and Peterborough, and the Church of the Monastery of St. Werburgh was assigned as a Cathedral. Previously the Bishop's Chair was placed in the grand old Church of St. John, as there were Bishops

of Chester in ancient times, as the author of the *Holy Life of St. Werburgh* sings:—

> "Also the see of Lichfield was translate to Chester
> By helpe and suffrance of the bysshop Peter";

and that good Bishop Peter enlarged the stately Church of St. John, which dated back to Earl Ethelred and his good wife Ethelfleda. The story of St. John's Church is full of fascination, especially when told by its vicar, Canon Cooper Scott.

Desolation reigned throughout the land when the King's Commissioners had stripped the churches and chapels of their valuables and endowments. The historian of *Vale Royal*, writing of the deserted and ruined chantries and chapels, states: "Wherein nothing now but the tune of lacrymæ is sung, crying out mercy, not for sinners, but for miserable singers, in these days."

Chester saw the sad burning of George Marsh, a Marian martyr.

The incessant passing of the military connected with the settlement of the Irish confiscated estates and of soldiers oscillating between the Low Countries and Ireland, and the constant presence of fierce, reckless adventurers, kept alive a martial spirit and made the county extremely lively. The following examples may suffice to show how great a thoroughfare Chester had become:—

1594.—There came into Chester at several times 2200 footmen and 1000 horsemen to go to Ireland for the suppression of the rebellion of Hugh Fardorough, Earl of Tyrone. The mayor had much ado to keep the soldiers quiet, and caused a gibbet to be set up at the high cross whereon three soldiers had like to be hanged.

1595.—There came to Chester at several times 2400 footmen and 300 horsemen to go to Ireland.

1596.—Nine hundred soldiers came to Chester, whereof 500 were sent to Ireland, and the rest, staying for a wind, were disbanded and sent away.

1597.—A thousand footmen and 280 horsemen came at several times and went into Ireland.

1598.—The Earl of Essex, lieutenant-general for the wars in Ireland, came into Chester, and with him three other earls, besides many other lords, knights, and gentlemen, who were honourably received by the Mayor and his brethren. A great army of soldiers went over to serve in Ireland, both horsemen and footmen, all under the command of the said Earl.

1599.—The 14th of February the Lord Mountjoy, Deputy of Ireland, and with him a great train, dined with the Mayor the 17th of February, and departed towards Wales the 19th of February to take shipping for Ireland.

1591.—Many soldiers were this year sent into Ireland.

In 1600 still larger consignments were sent and passed through the county. We hear of 4000 foot and 200 horse.

Soon the bugles of war sounded nearer at hand, and Charles was fighting against the Parliamentarians. Another pen will describe the horrors of that fearful war, and of that terrible siege of Chester, when the loyal inhabitants were nearly starved. We seem to see the ill-fated monarch watching with sad eyes from the Phœnix Tower on the city wall the defeat of his troops at Rowton Moor. Cheshire was a vast theatre of war, and witnessed more fighting than almost any other county. And sad was the havoc wrought. As in olden days, the gentlemen of Cheshire were as divided as ever; some were loyal, and others espoused the cause of the Parliament. Beeston Castle withstood a brave siege, and was afterwards "slighted" by Cromwell and reduced to its present state of ruin. Doddington Castle, Crewe Hall, Dorfold Hall, Cholmondeley Hall, Carden Hall were garrisoned, and endured attacks and sieges. Nantwich was a stronghold of the Parliamentarians; and even churches, such as Barthomley and Acton, were garrisoned and besieged. Adlington Hall, Stockport, Broughton Hall, Malpas, Tarvin, Huxley Hall, Birket House, Bunbury, and Nether-Legh all saw much fighting, and suffered from sieges

View of the City of Chester.

or attacks. A volume would be needed to tell of all the fightings in Cheshire during that disastrous war. No less than twenty-two of the great and beautiful houses of the gentlemen of the shire were destroyed.

The Cheshire folk soon wearied of Cromwell and Puritan ways, and as early as 1655 several of the principal gentry were imprisoned at Chester on the charge of disaffection to the Government. Four years later Sir George Booth, with the Earl of Derby, Lord Cholmondeley, and others raised 3000 men "to deliver the nation from slavery." A battle was fought at Winnington Bridge, near Northwich, but Booth's forces were defeated. The Restoration of King Charles in the following year was but a fulfilment of the design of the Cheshire "Chief of Men."

The Duke of Monmouth honoured the county with a visit in 1683, hunting for popularity and representing himself as the champion of Protestantism against the Roman tendencies of James II. His visit caused a "No Popery" riot in the Cathedral, when the mob did terrible damage, broke the font and organ, tore up surplices, destroyed the glass, and much else. The Duke acted as godfather to the Mayor's infant daughter, attended the Wallasey Races, rode his own horse, won the cup, and presented it to his godchild. The heads of the good citizens were turned by his graciousness, but that did not prevent them from ringing the bells of St. John's Church when the news came of his defeat at Sedgemoor. He is said to have hatched his insurrection at Bidston. Henry, Lord Delamere, son of Sir George Booth, was accused of an intention of raising a troop for the Duke, and had the unpleasant experience of being tried before the notorious Judge Jefferies, but strange to say he was acquitted. A few years later came James II., who heard mass in the little Early English chapel at the Castle. The good folk of Chester liked not his Roman Catholic ways, and we read the "King departed from Chester not well pleased with the disposition of the people." His course was soon run, and he fled the country.

Again the divided counsels of the Cheshire men were displayed. While Lord Delamere was raising a great force to support Dutch William, marching south to meet him, Lord Molyneux and Lord Acton seized Chester for King James. Happily no fighting was needed.

When James II. landed in Ireland in the spring of 1689 a large army was collected to oppose him. It was led by the Duke Schomberg, and suffered severely in camp during the ensuing winter for want of conveniences and even necessaries. Most of the army encamped for a week at Neston, and then embarked at Highlake (Hoylake) for Ireland. There were about a hundred vessels to convey them, and the port and river must have presented an animated scene. In the following summer large reinforcements passed through the city at various times, and the farmers of West Kirkby, Grange, Neston, and Meols made good profits by entertaining the officers billeted on them. William III. came in person, the army being encamped on the Wallasey Leasowes. He was at Chester on Sunday, June 10, attended service at the Cathedral, and slept at the house of William Glegg, Esquire of Gayton, whom he afterwards knighted.

Since that time no great events in the annals of England have occurred to disturb the peace of Cheshire. In subsequent chapters we hope to record the names of many of Cheshire's illustrious sons, and of the great and noble families who have shed lustre on the shire. We shall roam the countryside, see the traces of the great historic past, note the beauties of the ancestral houses, the half-timbered mansions, the red-sandstone farms, and if it be our good fortune to have been born within its borders, one of Cheshire's "Chief of Men," feel no little proud of our heritage.

THE COUNTY PALATINE OF CHESTER: ITS PLACE IN HISTORY

By Henry Taylor (Chester), F.S.A.

THAT safe guide Stephen's *Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England*, the English law student's *vade mecum*, in treating of "The Kingdom of England itself," says :—

"Three of the English counties, viz. Chester, Durham, and Lancaster, are called Counties *Palatine*. The two former are such by prescription or immemorial custom, which dates back at least to the Norman Conquest. Lancaster was created a County Palatine by Edward the Third in favour of Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Lancaster, whose heiress being married to John of Gaunt, the King's son, the franchise was greatly enlarged and confirmed in Parliament to honour John of Gaunt himself.

"Counties Palatine are so called *a palatio* because the owners thereof, the Earl of Chester, the Bishop of Durham, and the Duke of Lancaster, had formerly in those counties *jura regalia* as fully as the King in his palace. That is to say, they might pardon treasons, murders, and felonies; they appointed judges and justices of the peace; all writs and indictments ran in their names, as in other counties in the King's; and all offences were said to be done against their peace, and not as in other places *contra pacem domini regis*. These palatine privileges, so similar to the regal independent jurisdictions usurped by the great barons on the Continent, during the weak and infant state of the first feudal kingdoms in Europe, were in all probability originally granted to the counties of Chester and Durham because these counties bordered upon inimical countries, Wales and Scotland; in order that the owners, being encouraged by so large an authority, might be the more watchful in its defence. In the twenty-seventh year of Henry the Eighth, however, the powers before mentioned of the owners of these three counties palatine were abridged, the reason for their continuance having in a manner ceased, and in modern times alterations have taken place in regard to the administration of justice in the counties palatine, which have, for the most part, assimilated them in that respect to the rest of England. Thus by the Law Terms Act, 1830, the jurisdiction of the Court of Session of the County Palatine of Chester was abolished, and that county was subjected in all things to the

jurisdiction of the Superior Courts of Westminster. And by the Judicature Act, 1873, the jurisdictions of the Court of Common Pleas of Lancaster and of the Court of Pleas of Durham were respectively transferred to the High Court of Justice, by that Act established. None of the counties palatine any longer remain in the hands of subjects. For the Earldom of Chester was united to the Crown by Henry the Third, and has ever since been one of the titles of the monarch's eldest son ; the palatine jurisdiction of Durham was taken from the Bishop of Durham by the Durham (County Palatine) Act, 1836 (amended by the Durham Palatine Act, 1858), and was vested as a separate franchise and royalty in the Crown ; and the County Palatine of Lancaster, with the duchy which had been conferred on John of Gaunt, was at length, in the year 1485, vested in King Henry the Seventh and his heirs, as a distinct and separate inheritance from the Crown of England."

Of these three Palatinates we must, however, here treat only of Chester, the eldest of the trio. There were Earls of Chester in Saxon times, but the establishment of the Palatine County of Chester dates from the Norman Invasion. Before we proceed to describe its foundation and history, let us see what Camden, in his quaint way, has to say about Cheshire and its inhabitants. Quoting Lucian the Monk of Chester, he remarks :—

"Whoever sets about to describe the manners of the inhabitants of this County in general, or in particular, according to their situation, he will find them in comparison with those of other parts of England in some respects better, in others the same. Their manners seem to be in the main of the best sort, according to the general idea of manners. They are sociable in their entertainments, cheerful at meals, liberal in their hospitality, hasty, but soon brought to temper, impatient of dependance and bondage, kind to the distressed, compassionate to the poor, fond of their relations, sparing of labour, free from resentment, not given to excess in eating, undesigning, fond of borrowing other people's property, abounding with woods and pastures, rich in meat and cattle. They border on one side the Britons, and by long commerce of manners are become very like them. Nor must I forget to observe that the County of Chester bounded by Lime (Macclesfield) Forest from the rest of England enjoys distinguished immunities, and by the indulgences of our Kings and the great merit of its Earls is more accustomed to attend on the Sword of its own Prince than on the Crown of the Sovereign in the assembly of the people, and without restraint or reserve determine the most important causes within its own territories. Hence Chester itself is much frequented by Irish, a neighbour to the Welsh, and plentifully supplied with provisions by the English ; beautifully situated, its gates are of an ancient form of building ; approved by hard experience. It has merited the name of City by its river and ts watch-towers, defended by a watchful guard of holy men and through the mercy of our Saviour it has always been preserved by divine assistance."

The late Professor Freeman has said: "Chester was the last English city to bow to the Norman invader. After the fall of Chester no integral part of the English kingdom remained unsubdued. William was full King over all England."

Recognising, as the Romans before him had done, that Chester was the key to Wales, and also that it could be made the headquarters for an invasion of Ireland, the Norman Conqueror placed a great military camp there, and in A.D. 1070 granted to his kinsman and follower Hugh, surnamed Lupus of Avranches (which is situate on the borders of Normandy and Brittany close by Mont St. Michael), the whole of the present county of Chester, and as much of the neighbouring parts of Wales as he could secure, to hold as an independent state inferior to the Crown of England, "ita libere ad gladium, sicut ipse Rex totam tenebat Angliam ad coronam," "as the very words of the Charter do run," saith Camden. Which words, says Leycester the Chester antiquary, "some expound to be the tenure of being Sword-bearer of England, whence we read in Matthew Paris that when Henry III. married Eleanor of Provence, A.D. 1236, the marriage was pompously solemnised, and all the great men of the kingdom used those offices and places which had of ancient right belonged to their ancestors at the coronation of the Kings. The Earl of Chester (John Scot) then carried the Sword of St. Edward (which is called Curtein) before the King in token that he was an Earl Palatine and had power by right to restrain the King if he should do amiss, his Constable of Cheshire attending on him.

"But although this office might have of ancient right belonged to the Earls of Chester ever since the time of Hugh Lupus, yet I believe there is something more magnificent couched in these words of the first Charter or donation—namely, a dignity inherent in the Sword, as purchased by it, and to be kept by it also; for as in the Crown of England there is an inherent right of regality annexed, so here is given an inherent right of dignity in the Sword.

This is to hold as freely by the Sword as the King holds by the Crown, only inferior to the King. Hence was it that whatsoever we say concerning the pleas of the Crown or to be done against the King's Crown and Dignity, the same is also said (but in a more limited sense) concerning the pleas of the Sword of Chester, or against the Sword and Dignity of the Earl of Chester, as is most evident out of the records and indictments of those times."

There were seven of these Norman Earls, viz.:—

I. Hugh Lupus, before mentioned.
II. Richard his son who, when only twenty-five years of age and soon after his marriage, was drowned in the *White Ship* catastrophe, together with his bride and the two sons (William and Richard) of King Henry the First.
III. Randle Meschines, Viscount Bayeux of Normandy.
IV. Randle Gernons.
V. Hugh Cyveilioc.
VI. Randle Blundeville
VII. John the Scot, Earl of Huntingdon, who died without issue at Darnhall Abbey, Cheshire, on the 7th June 1237.

These Norman Earls had their Chamberlains or Chancellors; also Justices (before whom causes which of their nature should otherwise belong respectively to the King's Bench and Common Pleas were triable), a Baron of Exchequer, a Sheriff and other officers similar to those of the Crown at Westminster.

They also had palatinate Barons who held court in council with them. The form of act or grant of Hugh Lupus began thus: "Ego Comes Hugo et mei Barones." These barons were—

I. Nigel, Baron of Halton, High Constable of Cheshire.
II. Robert, Baron of Monte Alto or Montalt (Hawarden and Mold), High Steward of Cheshire.

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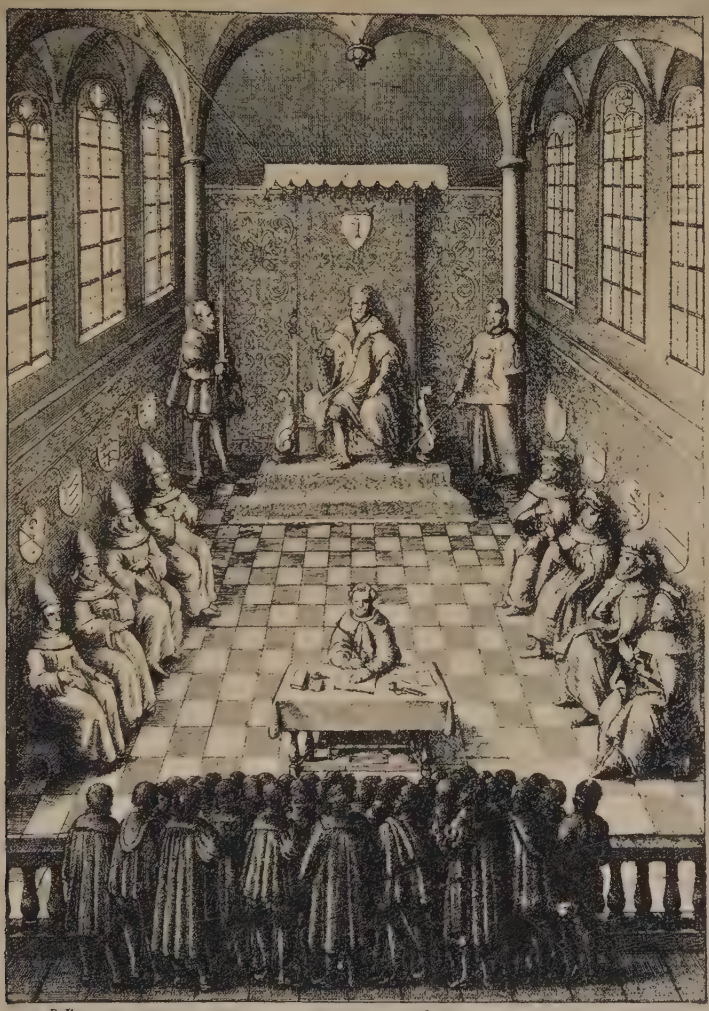


P. M.
Praenobilis Richardi Grossuenour de Eaton in Comit. Cestr: Eq. aur: et Baronetti ex Stirpe Comitum Cestriae, vt abiit de patet in Archivis A.° 12 Regis Ric: 2.

HUGH LUPUS EARLE of CHESTER sitting in his PARLIAMENT with the Barons and ABBOTS of that Countie PALATINE.

III. William, Baron of Wich Maldeberg (Nantwich).
IV. Robert FitzHugh, Baron of Malpas.
V. Richard Vernon, Baron of Shipbrook.
VI. Hamo de Massie, Baron of Dunham-Massie.
VII. Gilbert Venables, Baron of Kinderton, whose heirs male in the direct line continued until 1679—the last survivors of the Barons of Cheshire.
VIII. Nicholas, Baron of Stockport.
IX. Robert, Baron of Rhuddlan.

Each of these barons had his own court of all pleas, suits, and plaints (except such as belonged to the Earl), and power of life and death. The last instance of the execution of this latter power was in the person of Hugh Stringer, who was tried for murder in the court of Sir Thomas Venables, Baron of Kinderton, and was executed in 1597.

The business of these barons was to attend the Earl in Council, follow him, and grace his court, and as an old record sets forth, "they were bound in time of war with the Welsh to find for each knights-fee one horse harnessed or two unharnessed within the divisions of Cheshire. And their knights and free tenants were to be furnished with breastplates and haubergeons, and to defend their respective fees in person."

The Abbots of Chester and Combermere also had their own courts as well as the barons, and doubtless they and the heads of the other monasteries and priories were called to the Earl's Council in the same way that other ecclesiastics were summoned to the Parliaments of the early Kings of England. We here give a copy of the plate by Hollar in King's *Vale Royal* of "Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, sitting in his Parliament with the Barons and Abbots of that County Palatine."

Of these Norman Earls of Chester the distinguished pre-eminence of Earl Randle Blundeville during his long and active rule has been noticed by all writers on Cheshire history. That he was a strong man is evidenced by his

refusal in 1232 to comply with the demand for money from the county made by Henry III., as well as by his resistance to that King's permission given to the Pope's officers to collect Peter's Pence in his Palatinate, and his expulsion of those officers from the county, whereas all England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales paid.

On one occasion Blundeville was surprised and surrounded in his Castle of Rhuddlan by a superior force of Welsh. He contrived to send a message to his Constable de Lacy for help. It happened that the Abbot's great fair was being held at Chester, and de Lacy at once collected from those attending it an immense crowd of "Players, Fiddlers, Musicians, and other loose persons," and marched with them to the relief of Rhuddlan. The Welsh seeing this immense host, and hearing withal the terrible discord of "harp, flute, sackbut, psaltery, and other kinds of music," evidently concluded that Bedlam was let loose, raised the siege, and took flight.

> "Was ever an enemy thrown in such plight?
> Did ever a pen such a hist'ry indite?
> And yet the fact's true as black differs from white!"

After the Earl's return he rewarded de Lacy with an exclusive prerogative over the "Trades and Mysteries" of the followers in his rabble army. The Constable's son, John de Lacy, reserved his exclusive privileges over the mechanic occupations, but granted the Player and Minstrel prerogative to Hugh Dutton of Dutton and his heirs, who was the son of that Dutton who marched at the head of the minstrels. The Dutton family and their successors, down to the year 1756, regularly held a court (which in the Cheshire Recognisance Rolls is called "a Court of Histrionics"), and granted licences to play on musical instruments within the county and within the city of Chester. The various Acts of Parliament passed for the regulation of "Players Minstrels and other Rogues and Vagabonds" specially recognise this right, and exempt Cheshire from

their provisions. We believe to this day this right is recognised in the grant of certain music diplomas.

The rule of the Norman Earls of Chester may be said to have extended over a period of about one hundred and sixty-seven years—that is to say, from the time of the grant to Hugh Lupus down to the death of John the Scot, when, he having died in 1237 without male issue, the Crown seized the Earldom. King Henry III. then gave it to his son, Prince Edward, probably in 1245 (together with other possessions), on his marriage with the Princess Eleanor of Castile. Two years after this the new Earl—the first of the royal Earls of Chester—made his public entry into his county palatine, and in its ancient metropolis received the homage of his officers and military tenants. The entry in the *Chronicle* of St. Werburgh's Abbey recording the event runs thus:—

"1236. On the Feast of Kenelm (July 17) The Lord Edward, Earl of Chester, entered Chester for the first time, and was received with all due respect, as well the Clergy as the laity having gone forth to meet him. Having remained three days to receive the homage and fealty, as well of the Nobles of Chester as of Wales, he set out for Wales, to inspect his lands and Castles there, and returning on the day of the invention (or finding) of (the relics of) S. Stephen, August 3rd, he left Chester and returned to England,[1] going by way of Darnall."

On Prince Edward succeeding to the throne, he relinquished the Earldom in favour of his eldest son. His successors, on being invested with the executive power when they created their heirs-apparent to the Crown Princes of Wales, at the same time invested them with the Earldom. The oldest title the present King when Prince of Wales held was that of Earl of Chester.

The greater part of the present county of Flint was held by the Norman Earls before the conquest of Wales. King Edward I., after he had created it into a separate county, attached it to the "Sword of Chester" as presently described. It is evident that it was considered an important

[1] Observe the expression "left Chester and returned to England." Cheshire was a separate state apart from England.

appanage to the Earldom, as from time to time the name Flint has been associated with that of Chester, the title adopted being that of Earl of Chester and Flint. Edward of Windsor, eldest son of Edward II., was summoned to Parliament by the name of Earl of Chester and Flint, "since which time it has been continued as a title in the Princes of Wales; and there you will be sure to find who were Earls of Flint," says Peter Heylyn in his *Help to English History*. The last Prince of Wales summoned by that title to Parliament was Prince George, afterwards George II., in 1714.

If the reigning sovereign had no son to succeed him, the Earldom appears to have been retained by the Crown until a new creation. This was so in the case of Richard II., who styled himself Prince of Chester, and created the county palatine a principality. This, however, was revoked in the following reign.

There seems to have been a close attachment between this King and the people of Chester and of Wales, doubtless in consequence of the esteem in which they held his father, the Black Prince, whom they followed in his French wars, and who had placed confidence in them. King Richard had a bodyguard of 2000 Cheshire archers, many of whom accompanied him in his ill-fated expedition to Ireland, on his return from which he was taken prisoner by Bolingbroke at Flint Castle, and from there, it is said, brought to Chester Castle on his way to London.

When the conquest of Wales had been finally completed by the defeat and death of Prince Llewelyn, Edward the First proceeded to regulate the administration of the territory he had acquired. By his ordinance called the "Statute of Rhudland," he formed Flintshire into a county, attached, as previously mentioned, but subordinate to, that of Chester, and directed the Sheriff of Flintshire to render his accounts to the Exchequer there. The judges were appointed, sometimes for both counties, at others for each county separately. By the same statute the greater part of the district governed

by Llewelyn was divided into the three counties of Anglesey, Carnarvon, and Merioneth, and it was to these counties that the name of "North Wales" was originally confined. Chester and North Wales were the oldest of the Welsh Judicial Circuits.

Subsequently, on the petition of the Welsh themselves, in the reign of the Tudor King, Henry VIII., Wales was incorporated with England, and the Lordships Marches were divided into shires, the counties of Denbigh and Mongomery being added to North Wales. Wales then for the first time sent representatives to the English Parliament, but it was not until the reign of his son, King Edward VI., that the County Palatine of Chester was given parliamentary representation. Professor Freeman has said:—

"The Earldom of Hugh of Avranches stood alone in its greatness from the rest of the realm. How distinct Chester and Durham stood from the rest of the kingdom, is best shown by their having for so many ages (not until the reign of Edward VI.) no voice in the national Parliament. While Chester had its own courts and own baronage, knights and citizens from the all but independent state would have been as much out of place as knights and citizens from the Isle of Man or the Norman islands of the English Channel."

About this time also, viz. in 1542, it was enacted that sessions for the administration of justice should be held twice in every year in each of the twelve shires of Wales, to be called "The King's Great Sessions of Wales," apparently to distinguish them from those of the Justices of the Peace, who were directed to be eight in number in each county, and to hold their sessions four times a year. For the business of the Great Sessions, Wales was divided into four districts, each independent of the rest, with its own judge and its own establishment of judicial officers. Anglesey, Carnarvon, and Merioneth continued as before under the Justice of North Wales, and formed the North Wales Circuit; while Denbigh and Montgomery were joined to Chester, to which, as before mentioned, Flint from its first creation had been attached. Each Circuit at first had

a single judge, but in the reign of Elizabeth a second one was added. The judges were styled Justices, and within the limits of their Circuits they exercised all the powers of the Justices of King's Bench and Common Pleas. They also had an equitable jurisdiction, but important equity cases were seldom brought before them, as the Court of Chancery was open to Welsh suitors, and it was only in matters of immediate urgency that the powers of the Great Sessions as a Court of Equity were found of use. In equity an appeal lay to the House of Lords, and in legal cases "error" could be brought in the King's Bench. In the administration of criminal law, when cases of difficulty arose the opinion of the twelve Judges was obtained, in a similar way to that which was pursued in England. The process of the Courts could only be executed in the counties of the Circuit, and the want of further power to give effect to their orders outside their jurisdiction was one of their greatest disadvantages. But when final judgment had been obtained, a transcript of the record could be removed and execution issued from one of the Superior Courts. Each Circuit had its judicial seal. The use of seals was looked upon as a matter of paramount importance (as it is in many foreign Courts at the present time), and Henry VIII. himself is stated to have devised these seals. The original seal of Chester was used for Flint. Here we give an illustration from the last seal which was in use when the Chester Palatinate Court was dissolved. Another original seal for the shires of Denbigh and Montgomery was entrusted to the Steward and Chamberlain of Denbigh, and these two counties formed in some respects a distinct division of the Chester Circuit. Causes commenced in the Superior Courts could be sent down to Chester to be tried. The equitable jurisdiction at Chester belonged to the Chamberlain and not to the Justices. The Chamberlain's Court is described as having been one of a very singular character, and to have administered a mixture of law and equity. The Vice-Chamberlain presided as the Judge, and the business,

which is said to have been at one time considerable, appears latterly to have been small; but it is to be regretted that was abolished and not retained, as in the adjoining County Palatine of Lancaster, as in these days it would have been of great use.

The Chief-Justiceship of Chester, being the most lucrative as well as the most important of the Welsh Judgeships,

was looked upon as one of the great prizes of the profession, and was held by many distinguished men. When the Great Session came to an end the salary of the Chief Justice was £1630, and that of the second Justice £1250. An annual pension of £1015, 12s. was granted to Thomas Jervis (father of Sir John Jervis, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas), who was second Justice of Chester, by way of compensation for loss of his office. The Chief Justiceship of Cheshire was vacant at the time. In Ormerod's *History*

of Chester, in the *History of the Great Sessions of Wales*, by Mr. W. R. Williams, and in the contribution to the *History of the Courts of Great Session of Wales and of the Chester Circuit*, by the late Chancellor Trevor Parkins, from which I have obtained a considerable amount of information, is given a list of judges and officers of these Courts from early days to their abolition in 1830. A very important person on every Circuit was the Attorney-General, who was appointed by the Crown, and possessed all the powers of the King's Attorney-General. The principal officer on each Circuit was the Prothonotary, who attended on the Justices when they held their Courts, and discharged similar duties to those now performed by the Associate. He was appointed by the Crown, and was usually Clerk of the Crown also. The subordinate officers were a marshal, a registrar, and a crier, and these were appointed by the Chief Justice.

The Chamberlain of Chester or his Deputy was the Keeper of the original Seal of Chester and Flint. At Chester, where a considerable amount of business was transacted, there was a much larger bar than there was on the Welsh Circuits. The Northern Circuit was strongly represented there. John Williams, James Parke (afterwards Lord Wensleydale), Joseph Littledale, William Wightman, and Charles Crompton, all of whom became High Court Judges, were among the members of the Northern Circuit who practised at the Chester Assizes in the early years of the last century. David Francis Jones, for some time Recorder of Chester, better known as Sergeant Atcherley, and those eminent lawyers, John Horatio Lloyd and William Newland Welsby, Recorder of Chester, and long the leader of the present Chester and North Wales Circuit, were also members of the Chester Palatine Bar. Lord Kenyon and Chief Baron Richards, both of whom were afterwards Chief Justices of Chester, were among those who belonged to the Welsh Circuit.

We give an illustration of the old County Hall and

of the Old Court of Exchequer at Chester Castle (where causes were heard), before they were taken down and the present classical buildings, the creation of a Chester architect, were erected at the close of the eighteenth century, taken from the *Gentleman's Magazine* of June 1789. The Exchequer Court is said to have been the building in which the Norman Earls sat in Council.

Some years after the abolition of the Palatine Courts the records relating to them and to the County Palatine were examined, arranged, and ably reported upon by the late Mr. Black of the Public Record Office. Efforts were made to retain these records at Chester, where it was proposed that a branch of the Public Record Office should be established; but ultimately in the autumn of 1854 they were removed to London, first of all to the Tower, and afterwards to the Public Record Office in Chancery and Fetter Lanes.

I find in Appendix 11 of the Sixteenth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records the following:—"The records brought from Chester packed as closely as possible, filled four or five large boxes and 369 bags, about 100 of the latter being large five bushel bags. The weight was nearly 13 tons. They filled five of the largest London and North-Western Railway luggage vans." These records are being gradually cleaned and classified. The reports and calendars relating to them, which have already been published, are extremely valuable and interesting, although they only touch the very fringe of the information contained in such an immense mass of documents. There are no more able or courteous public servants than those in the Record Office, but they cannot do impossibilities, and unless the staff is increased it will be ages before the public can be informed of the entire contents of these valuable Cheshire and Welsh records. We here give one of the entries on the Chester Recognisance Roll of the time of the Owen Glyndwr rebellion, as a sample of the entries contained in the Deputy-Keeper's reports:—1403 September 4.—The Mayor, Sheriffs, and Aldermen

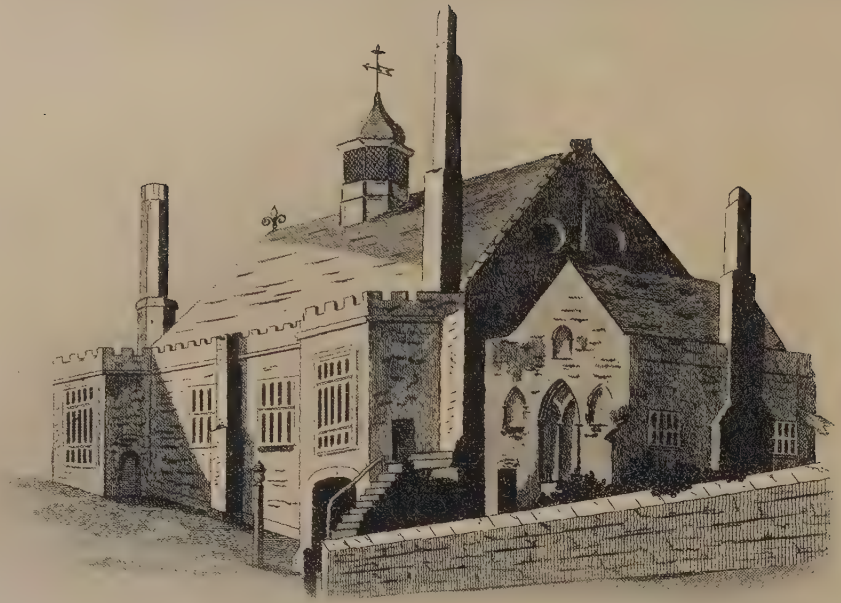
of the City of Chester are empowered and directed by Writ to "expel all Welsh from the City, both men and women, the same not to enter the City before sunrise or tarry in it after sunset, on pain of decapitation, nor presume to walk about armed, except with a knife to cut their dinner, nor to use any tavern or to hold meetings in the same, nor any three of the said Welsh to meet together within the Walls on pain of being sent to prison as rebels; and should any strangers, Welshmen, viz. from the County of Flint, or other parts of Wales, come to the said City, the same to leave their arms, &c., outside the gate by which they entered."

Camden, in speaking of Cheshire, has said "this County ever surpassed the rest in producing nobility, nor is there any County in England that has anciently brought more Noblemen into the field or can boast a greater number of Knightly Families."

"Cheshire Chief of Men" is an ancient Cheshire proverb, and is used by Michael Drayton in his *Polyolbion*.

We may summarise the history of the County Palatine of Chester thus:—On its foundation and during the reigns of the Norman Earls, it assumed the form of a semi-regal state. Afterwards, on the assumption of the Earldom by the eldest sons of the Kings of England, it became their most ancient appanage, and at first was maintained with all its regalities. Edward I. made Chester his headquarters during his Welsh wars, and resided in the city and neighbourhood more than any other sovereign or prince has done. Subsequently the powers of the Palatinate were gradually vested in the Crown, and finally abolished in the reign of Henry VIII., the administration of the law being all that was left of its ancient prerogatives. Finally, by the Act of 1830 this peculiar jurisdiction was also taken from it, and, as we have already seen, in 1854 all its records (the muniments of its former greatness) were removed to London.

All that remains is the name "County Palatine," and the title it gives to the reigning monarch's eldest son.



THE OLD SHIRE HALL, CHESTER.
(*Now pulled down.*)

THE ABBEYS OF CHESHIRE

By the Archdeacon of Chester

IT is more than possible that the title of this paper will provoke the question from our readers, "Where are they?" There are no beautiful and picturesque ruins like Fountains, or Tintern, or Glastonbury to be visited, and we are compelled to go back to the period of the Dissolution of the Monasteries to find out how the county was in previous ages served and helped by religious houses. When we do this we discover that Cheshire did not contain a large number; in short, that there were only four counties (those of Cumberland, Westmorland, Rutland, and Lancaster) and the two Welsh dioceses of St. Asaph and Bangor, which had fewer. If, however, we look at their value, Cheshire took a higher place, as ten counties, in addition to the four Welsh dioceses, were inferior to it in this respect This was due to the richness of the Abbey of St. Werburgh at Chester, of which the possessions amounted to three-fifths of the whole. In fact, St. Werburgh's, valued at £1003, was richer than Fountains (£998), nearly as rich as Ely (£1084), though considerably poorer than Reading (£1938) and St. Albans (£2102).

But when we remember the debt which we owe in the past to the monasteries, and how they kept alive in the dark ages both education and religion, we must admit that a volume like the present would be incomplete without some account of the Abbeys which were situated in the county, even though in some cases the name only remains. The title also excludes foundations like St. John's, Chester, which was for secular canons, and another of a similar

character at Bunbury. It might also reasonably take no count of the Hospital of Little St. John's, Chester, though this is included in the list given by Dugdale, no doubt because it was connected with the Abbey of Birkenhead. On its site now stand the Blue Coat School and Almshouses founded by Bishop Stratford in 1700. The Abbeys mentioned by Dugdale are St. Werburgh, Chester, St. Mary's Nunnery, Chester, and Birkenhead, which were Benedictine; Vale Royal and Combermere, which were Cistercian; and Norton, which belonged to the Augustinian Canons. There was also Stanlow, which was translated to Whalley, in Lancashire, A.D. 1294; and, for a very short period, a Cell of Augustinian Canons at Mobberley. It will be convenient to take them in the reverse order to that in which they are here given.

The small house at Mobberley was founded in 1206 by Patrick de Mobberley. He no doubt intended to establish a permanent institution, but it came to an end at his death, as he had only a life-interest in the estate with which he endowed it, and the fact of its having existed only remains as an interesting feature in the history of that parish.

Stanlaw, or Stanlow, was an Abbey of the Cistercian Order, and was built on a rocky eminence jutting out into the river Mersey where the river Gowy joins it. Some remains of the buildings still exist. Originally they were extensive and handsome. At the end of the thirteenth century the lands and buildings suffered severely from the encroachments of the sea and from fire, and the great body of the monks were transferred (not without protest from several quarters) to Whalley, in Lancashire, and only six left in charge of the church and buildings. The ruins are interesting, but are now more difficult of access, being cut off by the Manchester Ship Canal.

Norton Priory belonged to the Augustinian or Austin Canons. At the Dissolution it was purchased of the King by Richard Brooke, and the property still remains in that family. A mansion was built on its site, and the only

relics of the monastery are to be found now in the basement or cellar, where an old doorway may be seen, which was no doubt part of the substructure of the religious house. It is worthy of note that the suppression of the monastery was stoutly resisted by the Abbot or Prior and his companions, who were taken prisoners. The house still bears the name of Norton Priory. In 1643 it was besieged by the Royalists, who were repulsed, owing to the sturdy defence which was offered by the eighty men who were sheltered in it.

Combermere Abbey is, again, only a name for the country residence belonging to the Cotton family, but now occupied by Katharine, Duchess of Westminster. The Abbey was Cistercian, but was apparently demolished when the present house was built, though some fancy that traces of the old work are to be seen in portions of the building. It was the second richest Abbey in Cheshire, though it did not reach in value one quarter of what St. Werburgh's was assessed at. A cell of this Abbey was founded in 1153 at Pulford, near Chester, by Robert, the Earl of Chester's baker, when his lord was a prisoner to King Stephen. The Earl on his release confirmed the foundation, and granted the monks a fishery in the Dee. In 1214 the cell was removed into Staffordshire on account of the frequent incursions of the Welsh.

Vale Royal was another Cistercian foundation. It had an interesting history, and it must be a matter of regret that no remains of the original building are left, unless traces of the refectory are to be seen in the south wing of the residence, now the seat of Lord Delamere. It was founded in 1277 by King Edward I., hence the title Vale Royal. Originally the monks had a temporary home at Darnhall, and it was not until 1330 that they were established at Vale Royal, where £32,000 had been spent upon the buildings. Their royal patron bestowed great privileges upon the monks, including the extensive right of advowry or protection of criminals, and the power of life and death in their manors of Darnhall, Over, and Weaverham. We

learn from some records that have been left that the Abbots had a somewhat troubled experience, and that some of their number were decidedly warlike in their tastes.

We come now to consider the Benedictine houses which were situated in the county. Birkenhead was not large, and was for sixteen monks, and its value was only £93. As has been stated above, it had some connection with Chester, for the Hospital of St. John, outside the North Gate, was attached to it. Some remains of the Abbey are left which are interesting. The monks were sixteen in number, and the Abbey possessed the exclusive right of ferryage, and the name Monks' Brow Ferry still survives. The ruins consist of the refectory and Prior's apartment, and of the church. There is also a crypt with elegant groined roof, and the chapter-house, which was used as a chapel before the present church was built at the beginning of the last century. Washington Irving, in his *Sketch Book*, vol. i., writes: "As we sailed up the Mersey I saw the mouldering ruin of an Abbey overrun with ivy and the taper spire of a village church rising from the brow of a neighbouring hill;—all were characteristic of England." The Hospital of St. John, Chester, was attached to the Priory, the mastership being granted to the Prior and his successors by Edward II. The chapel and hospital were destroyed during the civil wars.

St. Mary's Nunnery, Chester, stood in the south-west corner of the city, and the name was retained in the title Nuns' Gardens, and now in the newer title Nuns' Road. Until 1840 some of the ruins existed on the site, but in that year they were removed, and an arch (which may have been part of the church) was taken to St. John's Priory, the house where De Quincey once lived, and was subsequently erected in the Grosvenor Park, where it may now be seen. The arch appears to indicate a building of the thirteenth century. A plan in the British Museum of the date of Queen Elizabeth gives certain details of the buildings, and we learn from it that the dimensions of the church were 66 feet by 45 feet, of the cloisters 90 feet by 60 feet, and of

the chapel (no doubt the Abbess') 27 feet by 14 feet. We gather from other sources that the Abbess at the Dissolution was named Elizabeth Grosvenor, and that she retired on a pension of £20 a year; and that in 1553 thirteen nuns were still living and in receipt of pensions. In the Calendar of Patent Rolls is preserved a chartulary of the nunnery down to the year 1400. The foundation by Randulf Gernons,

BIRKEHEDDE PRIORY, *in* CHESHIRE.

Earl of Chester, dates about the year 1150. The founder and his successors, Earl Hugh and Earl Randulf Blundeville, and many others, gave many and valuable gifts to the nunnery, which, besides manors and landed possessions, included the right to have one boat in the water of Chester, together with one net, and the privilege of free multure of their corn for the table at the Chester mills. Even more interesting than these various charters is a copy of the processional of the nuns, preserved in the collection of the Earl of Ellesmere, for it throws some light upon their

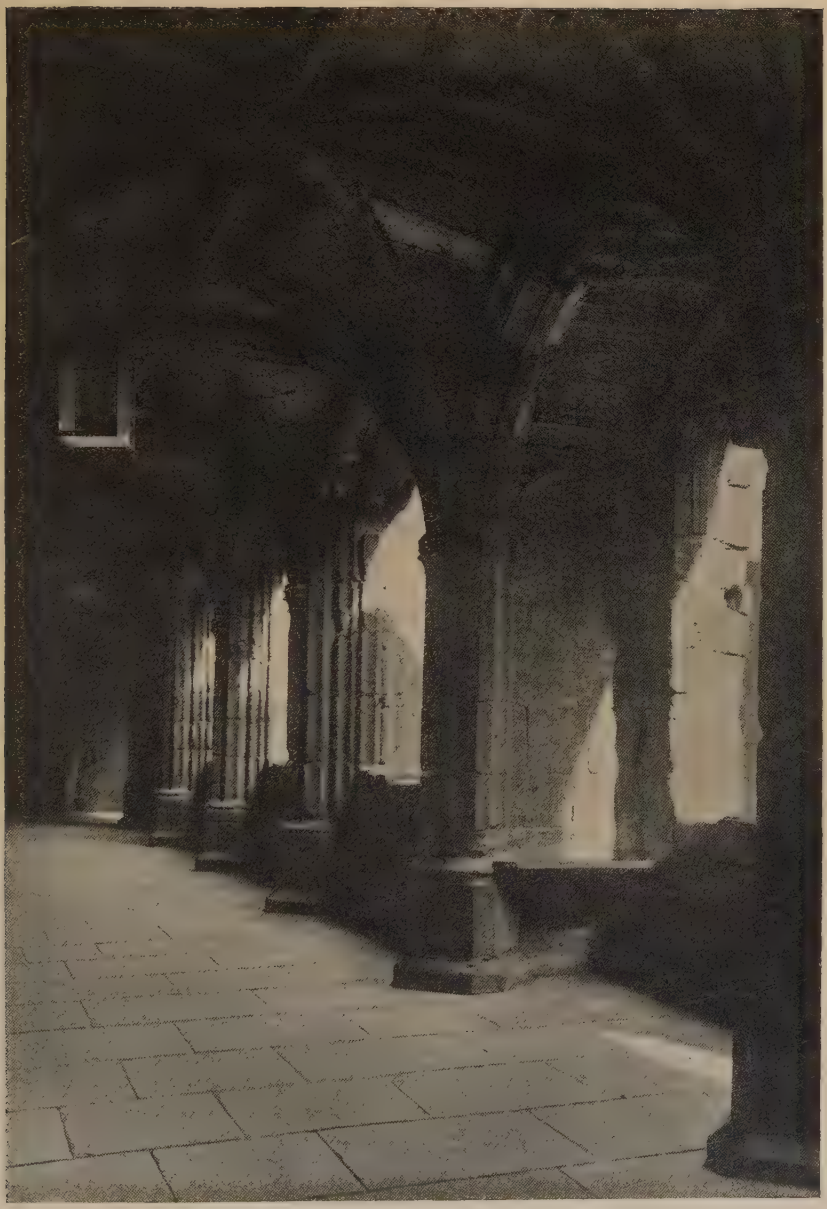
services and on the extent of their buildings, for no fewer than twelve altars are mentioned by name. But perhaps the most interesting relic is to be found at the end of this manuscript in a charming carol, which has been rendered into modern notation by Professor J. C. Bridge, Mus. Doc., M.A., F.S.A., and which is occasionally sung in Chester Cathedral. There is thus a delightful connection between the present and the past.

We now come to St. Werburgh's Abbey, preserved to to us in the present Cathedral. Here, as at Gloucester, Bristol, and Peterborough, the foundation of a new See at the dissolution of the monasteries has had the effect of keeping for us the church of the monks, with some adjacent buildings, so that we are able to estimate in some degree what their Abbey was like. Here, too, in the stones of the edifice, with its varying styles of architecture, is written a history which is well worthy of careful consideration, and which brings before us many personages of note and importance. We have reason to believe that a religious house existed on the same spot in Saxon times, though no trace of such a building is visible; for in the year 875 the remains of St. Werburgh were brought to Chester from Hanbury, during an incursion of the Danes, and enshrined in a church said to have been dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. She was the daughter of Wulfhere, King of Mercia, who, according to one authority, first built the Abbey in 660. She was a niece of St. Etheldreda, Abbess of Ely, whom she succeeded, and was herself head of establishments for nuns at Trentham, Hanbury, and elsewhere, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that her uncle Ethelred placed all the religious women in the kingdom of Mercia under her rule. It was probably from the date of the translation of her remains to the church in Chester that the dedication was changed to St. Werburgh. A century and a half later we are told that secular canons were established in a monastery of St. Werburgh and St. Oswald. The buildings were repaired and enlarged by Leofric, Earl of Chester, in 1057;

NORMAN DOORWAY IN CLOISTERS, CHESTER CATHEDRAL.

but in 1093 the Abbey was reconstituted, the secular canons were banished, and a body of regulars of the Order of St. Benedict was introduced by Hugh Lupus, the Norman Earl of Chester. In this work he was assisted by his friend St. Anselm, then Abbot of Bec in Normandy, whom he had invited over for that purpose. The story is that Anselm hesitated to accept the invitation lest he should be placed in the vacant chair at Canterbury. Eventually he came, and was called to fill the primatial see. There can be no doubt that Anselm was responsible for the planning of the Norman Church of St. Werburgh, of which distinct traces are to be seen in the north wall of the edifice, the basement of a north-west tower (never finished), the north transept, and the large vaulted cellar or chamber on the west side of the cloisters. Though there are no remains of Norman cloisters left, there are plain indications that the cloister garth must have coincided with that which we have at the present day. It is a matter of considerable interest, then, to be able to associate the name of Anselm with the Abbey in Chester, and to know that he must have been anxious in some measure to reproduce in England the learning for which Bec had by that time become noted. His chaplain, Richard, became the first Abbot of the newly founded monastery; and even the material characteristics of his old home may be said to have been reproduced, of which evidence is found in the strange stone roof of the apse at the end of the south choir aisle. There was now established a body of regulars of the Benedictine Order, which was to find its home here for four hundred and fifty years. During that period the monks, as well as their buildings, went through many vicissitudes. In 1180 a destructive fire devastated the whole of the city, and no doubt as a consequence of this, in 1194, we find the seventh Abbot complaining that the church was in ruins. He was able to raise enough money wherewith to build the choir, and his successor appears to have completed the repairs, and even to have extended the buildings under the patronage and with the aid of Earl Randle, surnamed

Blundeville. But troublous times again arose, and the Abbots had much difficulty in protecting both their property and their church. In 1265 Simon de Whitchurch became Abbot, and has left his mark behind him in the eastern bays of the nave and in the beautiful and elegant Lady Chapel, which is such an excellent specimen of Early English architecture. Here is to be seen some early vaulting on the roof, a feature not common in the building generally, as though provision was made by graceful shafts in the choir and elsewhere, it was only completed in the Lady Chapel and in the aisles of the choir, either from lack of funds or for some other reason. In the groining one of the bosses has a representation of the martyrdom of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and as this must have been put up only a hundred years after his death, it shows how soon Becket attained a high position in the estimation of his countrymen. About the same time was erected the Chapter-house with its vestibule, an exquisite example of architecture as it developed from the Norman to Early English; and to the same date we may refer the refectory with its matchless reading pulpit. The latter building is unfortunately in a maimed condition, as one-third of it is roofless and has been separated from the rest, whilst the raising of the ground on the north side, and the erection there of some modern houses, quite destroys the original effect of the exterior. It would be a great and noble undertaking if this room could be carefully restored to its proper form and proportions. Subsequent Abbots were engaged in the completion of the choir, and in the fifteenth century Abbots Simon Ripley and Birchenshaw did much to extend and enlarge the fabric. One of the most striking features of the Abbey (now the Cathedral) is the south transept, which is almost as large as the nave. The north transept is quite small as designed by Anselm, and the south transept was no doubt originally of the same size. When the monks desired to extend their church by the addition of more chapels they could not build on the north side as their other buildings occupied that space. On the



CLOISTERS, CHESTER CATHEDRAL.

(West Walk, showing one of the Monks' Studies.)

south they found a parish church, which they removed, building another church for the parishioners on an adjoining site. They then built the large south transept, in which were four altars in their respective chapels, the vaulting of only one being erected at the time. After about forty years the parishioners asserted their rights, and assumed occupation of the transept, which thereafter became the Parish Church of St. Oswald until 1880, when it was once more thrown into the main building, and the partition which had separated it was removed. Here the clerestory windows, as in the nave, are Late Perpendicular, but the tracery of the other windows gives us a good specimen of Decorated work. The interior was restored eight years ago as a worthy memorial of the late Duke of Westminster. The central tower was probably erected by these later builders, but its plainness and severity were removed when it was refaced and ornamented under the direction of Sir Gilbert Scott. The same Abbots commenced the building of a south-western tower, which was not, however, carried higher than the nave roof, the corresponding position on the north side being occupied by the base of Anselm's Norman tower, which was incorporated in the Abbot's lodgings. Before dismissing the exterior of the church, it should be noted that the Early English builders extended the Norman church eastwards, and added apsidal chapels to the aisles. These were removed in Perpendicular times, and a further extension of the aisles was made; but that on the south was taken down by Sir Gilbert Scott, and the Early English portion was restored.

We inherit from the monks in the interior of the church some most beautiful and elegant woodwork in the choir stalls, with their quaint and richly carved *Misereres* and the delicate tabernacle work with which they are crowned. There is probably no finer specimen in England, both in design and execution, and it is a matter of sincere congratulation that it has been preserved, especially when it is remembered that the position of the stalls has been changed more

than once. The shrine of St. Werburgh, now placed at the west end of the Lady Chapel, is another treasure, and was designed in the fourteenth century to take the place of an earlier structure. It has had a varied history, the lower part having been used as the base of the Bishop's throne for many years after the foundation of the See. It was adorned with forty figures, richly gilded, representing ancestors or relatives of St. Werburgh.

It should be noted that in monastic times the choir included one bay of the nave, an arrangement still to be seen in some of our cathedrals. One old fireplace is to be seen at the entrance to the north choir aisle, and this was, no doubt, used for heating the obley irons with which the wafers were prepared for the Blessed Sacrament.

Though many of the buildings of the monastery have been destroyed, sufficient are left to enable us, with the aid of a plan, made probably early in the seventeenth century, to recall the daily life of the monks. The cloisters are perfect in form, though the tracery of the windows has in some instances perished, whilst the glass has altogether vanished. On the south side, rebuilt recently, and on the south part of the west side, may be seen the carrels or places where the monks studied, two in each carrel, and hard by are the armaria or recesses where the books or manuscripts were kept. Close at hand is the seat where the librarian would have his position, ready to supply any book or material which might be wanted. At the south-west corner was the place where youths were instructed. The floor would be strewn with hay or straw, mixed with herbs, to afford some little warmth or protection to the silent monks as they wrote and studied. The silence would be broken now and again by the footsteps of those who were entering or leaving the church, where the offices were said; otherwise the place would be perfectly still save for the voice of the monk instructing his pupils. In this way would the everyday life of the religious be spent. On the north side was the refectory, where the meals were served,

NORMAN CHAMBER, CHESTER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS
(*Secunda Aula of the Abbey.*)

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

and even at such times, as a rule, there would not be ordinary conversation, but the monks would in order take their place in the beautiful and unique pulpit, and read out of some devotional or instructive book for the edification of the brethren. On the eastern side was the dormitory, reached by a staircase which still exists through the doorway in the north-eastern corner. On the north side, in the exterior wall of the refectory, graced by a beautiful Early English arcade, was the washing trough or lavatory, and we can imagine the monks, when they had descended each morning from the dormitory, performing here their simple ablutions. The water was conveyed in pipes from the neighbouring village of Christleton. On the west side was the great hall of the Abbot's lodgings, and underneath it a vaulted chamber, which could be entered from the cloister, and might be used as an ambulatory or place for exercise when the weather was unpropitious. In the south-east was (and is) an ornamental doorway leading through the vestibule to the Chapter-house, where the brethren sat in conclave to consider matters affecting the welfare of the body. Eastwards of this was the infirmary, where the sick and aged were tended, but no remains of this building or others near it are now left. The style of architecture of the present cloisters is Late Perpendicular, and their date is fixed pretty accurately, for the arms of Cardinal Wolsey on one of the bosses show that he must have been Archbishop of York when they were erected. Similarly, we may add, the Cardinal's arms are to be seen on the flat oak roof of the north transept, the only portion of the church where no provision was made for groining. Another boss in the cloisters bears the initials of Thomas Marshall, who was Abbot for a few months in 1529. But though the present cloisters are of this late date, there is little doubt that they are only the successors of earlier ones. In fact, the Early English decoration above the lavatory seems to indicate that cloisters in that style had existed, whilst the late Mr. Parker, in 1857, gave it as his opinion that "there was an

was held a fair or market, about which certain disputes arose between the monks and the citizens which were finally settled in 1488.

Of the Abbot's dwelling, converted at the Dissolution and foundation of the See of Chester into the Bishop's Palace, some few but interesting remains are still extant. For instance, the basement of the projected north-west Norman tower was, according to the plan in the British Museum, the wine cellar. It was reached by a spiral staircase from the room above, which was probably the Abbot's private apartment, and became the Bishop's study, obtaining its light from a fan-light in the ceiling. On the north of this was the Abbot's chapel, which was a Norman building, and entered from his room by a fine doorway. This again was used by the Bishop, and in Bishop Bridgman's time had a Jacobean chancel added to it. The chapel is in a somewhat dilapidated condition, and is approached from the church by the above-mentioned staircase. "The wine cellar" and the room above have been thrown into the Cathedral, and now form the baptistery, and in it is a beautiful fifth-century font of Italian origin, which was given by the late Earl Egerton of Tatton in 1885. From "the wine cellar" a square-headed doorway, now filled up, led into "the pantry," and beyond this was "the strong-beer cellar." It is possible that the names given to these apartments simply indicate the purpose to which they were put when the Bishop's Palace was here, and that they have no reference to the use made of them in monastic times. But they were, at any rate, part of the Abbey buildings. "The strong-beer cellar," with its graceful columns and vaulted roof, has been restored by the Dean and Chapter, and is now known as "the vaulted chamber," and is most useful for lectures and meetings. The Abbot probably, like the Bishop, was able to come down into the church without going into the open air; at any rate, the latter could do this.

The Abbey had certain small houses or dependencies in the neighbourhood. To such houses the title Grange

was often applied, and Saighton Grange, the residence of the Right Honourable George Wyndham and Countess Grosvenor, was such an appanage of St. Werburgh's Abbey. The present building was only a portion, probably the gateway, of the original structure. At Ince was another, and here again some interesting remains are to be seen, though they have been converted into cottages and for agricultural uses. A small number of monks no doubt always resided at such places, and generally had charge of the services in the church. The other brethren might seek change of scene and air by occasional visits. The Granges would also be necessary for the storage of the crops, which could not be carried into the city, and at Ince the large barn used for this purpose is still to be seen. When we remember the frequently unsettled state of the country, especially on the Welsh borders, we are not surprised to learn that in 1499 permission was given to the Abbot to fortify the Granges at Ince, Saighton, and Sutton, so that protection might be afforded to the residents and to the movable property of which they were custodians. Both at Ince and Saighton we may see traces of the work which was then undertaken.

The Abbey of St. Werburgh cannot claim amongst her sons men of such distinction as the Venerable Bede, the monk of Jarrow; but Ralph Higden, a lay brother, who died in 1363, may be mentioned as a writer of some distinction. He was the author of *Polychromicon*, a record of events from the Creation to his own time. It is in seven books, and compiled from various authorities, and, though not free from inaccuracies, is a surprising work considering the age in which it was written. Bishop Creighton says that the work enjoyed unexampled popularity, and was schemed with a completeness never known before. It stands out as a memorial of the patient study and research which often characterised the lives of the dwellers in our monasteries, and may thus help us to realise how much we owe to their labours in the preservation of our history

and literature. Higden's tomb may still be seen in the south choir aisle.

From what has been already said, it will readily be admitted that we owe a deep debt to those monks of old for the loving care and artistic skill which they lavished on the Houses of God, and for the patient labour whereby they preserved for future ages our literature, both ecclesiastical and secular. The services, too, in many a parish were maintained by them, and it is hardly too much to say that the lamp of religion would have been utterly darkened in many a place, if it had not been kept alight by the teaching and preaching of those who had their home in the monasteries. Nor must we forget, what has already been hinted at, that the monks were virtually the only—at any rate the chief—instructors of the youth of the country, and thus did much for the education and elevation of the people. They, too, were the principal almoners of the poor, who must have suffered acutely when the monasteries were suppressed. In all these different ways there is no reason to doubt that the Abbeys of Cheshire (and especially the comparatively wealthy one of St. Werburgh's) did their part and share for the benefit of those around them, and, like similar institutions elsewhere, did much to inspire and preserve a high and noble ideal of Christian life. This is not the occasion or the place to discuss fully the great question of the suppression of the monasteries, or the motives of those who were responsible for it, and the means which they adopted for the purpose. But the candid student of history, unless he be very bigoted, cannot but admit that the measure was characterised by some very questionable acts, and marked by deeds which cannot be defended. The reformation of the religious houses—or of such as needed such treatment —could probably have effected all that was necessary, and have been more beneficial to the country at large. The monasteries might have adapted themselves to the changed circumstances and to the growing needs of the age. At any rate there need not have been that terrible and needless

waste shown in the wanton destruction of countless treasures of art and learning, whereby opportunities for the improvement of man were deliberately thrown away. Not to mention the reliquaries and church plate, which were unscrupulously seized and desecrated, books and manuscripts of priceless value were destroyed, painted windows broken, hospitals and schools closed, buildings unroofed, and suffered to fall into ruin, and to become a mere quarry for the neighbourhood. In these various ways no doubt Cheshire suffered much like the rest of England; but the preservation of the Abbey of St. Werburgh as the future Cathedral of the newly founded See of Chester, rendered the loss much less than it would otherwise have been. Still it was sufficiently great, though it is not possible now fully to estimate it. All that was left to the Church from the Dissolution of the monasteries were the six poorly-endowed bishoprics, Westminster, Oxford, Chester, Gloucester, Bristol, and Peterborough, and of these Westminster was appropriated by the Crown in 1550.

Though not strictly comprised in the title of this paper, perhaps mention ought to be made of the other religious houses which were under the friars. Of these there were three in the city of Chester, all in one quarter, the record of the fact being still preserved in the names of three streets, Whitefriars, Blackfriars, and Greyfriars. These represent respectively the three orders, the Carmelites, the Dominicans, and the Franciscans. The only remains of these establishments are to be found in certain walls, which, if not the actual boundary walls, have been evidently erected with stones from the buildings. Whitefriars possessed a church with a steeple, erected in 1496, "of great height and beauty." An old annalist records that "in 1597 the Whitefreeres Steeple, curiously wrought, was taken downe, and a faire house built there by Sir Thomas Egerton, Knight, Lord-keeper: a great pitie that the steeple was put away, being a great ornament to the citie. This curious spire steeple might still have stood for grace to

the city, had not private benefit, the devourer of antiquitie, pulled it down with the church, and erected a house for more commodity, which since hath been of little use, so that the city hath lost so goodly an ornament that tymes hereafter may more talk of it, being the only sea-mark for direction over the bar of Chester." The quotation (which is from Harleian MS. No. 2125) is not without interest, especially in its condemnation of the destruction of historical buildings for merely utilitarian purposes. At the Dissolution the Whitefriars had a prior, sub-prior, and eight brethren. The other houses were no doubt also small, and, of course, in accordance with their tenets, there was little or no property beyond the buildings which constituted their home. The retention of the names in the streets mentioned above may occasionally induce thinking men to consider what we owe to the friars. If the monk withdrew from the world, the friar plunged into its busiest haunts. The one used the weapon of prayer and intercession, the other went as a missionary among men. The one kept alive the lamp of learning, and wrote or preserved for future generations literature which otherwise would have been lacking. The other brought the influence of religion into the daily common life of mankind. To both we of the present day owe a debt of gratitude; and our consideration of the Abbeys of Cheshire ought not to be limited to recalling the nature and number of the fabrics, without some thought of the labour of those who inhabited them, and of the heritage which they have passed on to us.

It ought to be mentioned that when the See of Chester was founded, the dedication of the church was altered, and the Abbey of St. Werburgh was constituted the cathedral church of the diocese by the name of "The Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chester." We may regret the change, though there is still one church in the diocese dedicated to the daughter of Wulfhere, that of St. Werburgh, Warburton (or Werburgh town).

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CHESHIRE CASTLES

By the Archdeacon of Chester

CONSIDERING that Cheshire lies on the border of Wales, and bearing in mind the frequent incursions made in early days by the inhabitants of the Principality, we should expect to find in the county, or, at any rate, in the portion opposed to these attacks, many fortified buildings or castles. Such, however, is not the case. There are few examples of ancient castles to attract the attention of the resident or the traveller, and we have nothing approaching in size or interest the magnificent pile of Warwick. That the borderland was guarded and protected by numerous fortifications is quite true, but, as will be seen, most of these have disappeared entirely, leaving behind them only the name, with little or no traces above ground of the buildings which once were there, and which played no unimportant part in the history, not of the county only, but of the nation. It may be well to look at these, with special reference to their origin and purpose as works of defence.

Looking, then, at that part of Cheshire which is adjacent to Wales, we shall find that a close and strong line of forts was established in very early days. The estuary of the Dee formed a sufficient protection in itself for the Wirral until Shotwick was reached, and as this place at one time was not only a port of departure for Ireland, but also afforded a landing for a crossing from Flintshire, it was natural that it should be selected as a site of a castle. Then, following the course of the Dee upwards, we have first, as was to be expected, a strong castle at Chester, which also had the protection of its ancient walls. Above

the city, and on the other side of the river, there were castles of varying size and construction at Dodleston, Aldford, Pulford, Shocklach, Malpas, and Oldcastle. A second and inner line of defence would be furnished by castles at Beeston, Maiden Castle on the Broxton Hills, Newhall in Audlem parish, and Nantwich; whilst a third line, and one protecting attacks from the Mersey and its tributary the Weaver, included Runcorn, Halton, and Rocksavage, Frodsham and Northwich, with Thelwall and Dunham Massy higher up still. It must not be supposed, however, that all these date from the same period, or could always be used at one and the same time to resist attacks. They are mentioned thus as showing their disposition over the county.

It will readily be understood that around these different spots, events of great interest and of lasting consequence have centred, and that they have witnessed many things which, if they could now be rescued from oblivion, would add points of supreme importance to the memorials of Old Cheshire. We can only here give very slight indications of their history, but even these may not be without some result, especially if it leads people to make further inquiries and investigations for themselves. It may be well first to give some information as to those which have entirely disappeared, and then to turn to those which are still in evidence by the remains which exist. Shotwick must, from its situation, already indicated, have been a position of considerable importance. Although portions of it were standing in Leland's time, nothing but the mounds which mark its site are to be seen. Its walls have all disappeared, though the ruins remained in 1622, and, according to Lysons, "the stones were carried way to repair roads within the memory of man"! It received several royal visitors. Henry II. is said to have lodged here on his way to and from Ireland, and King Edward I. was here in 1278. A plan and sketch of the castle are in the British Museum in the Harleian MSS., from which it

appears that it was pentagonal in form, with several circular towers enclosing a lofty square one. Of Dodleston, Aldford, and Pulford nothing but the sites remain, though in the two former the earthworks, which include about an acre in each case, are visible. The same may be said of Shocklach, which was said to have been burnt by the Welsh in 1121. This occupied a moated site near Castleton Bridge (deriving its name from the castle), adjoining a small stream. Hanshall gives rough sketch-plans of all these, and tells us that at Shocklach the keep was 22 feet in height. It is more remarkable that we have no remains left of Malpas, though the site of the keep is seen near the church, for here one of Hugh Lupus's Barons had his seat, and we might have imagined that some portion of the building would have been preserved. Oldcastle, again, is a name only. This also is in Malpas parish. The castle is said to have been burnt by the Welsh at the same time that Shocklach was destroyed. In 1565 not a vestige of its walls remained. On Oldcastle Heath the Royalist forces were defeated in 1644.

Nantwich Castle was in ruins before the reign of Henry VII., when the stones were removed and made use of for the purpose of enlarging the south transept of the church, which was called Kingsley's aisle. Newhall was in the parish of Audlem and not far from Nantwich, and was also destroyed by the Welsh, probably at the same time as Shocklach and Oldcastle. Leland, in his *Itinerary*, speaks of "Newhaull Tower, where there be motes and fair water." Maiden Castle was an old British fortification on the Broxton Hills, and defended the pass between Bickerton Hill and Raw Head. It commanded a most extensive and magnificent prospect. On the south-west side it was protected by a precipice, whilst on the other side the earthworks formed a perfect semi-circle, and outside this was a ditch 15 yards wide. The only entrance was on the north side. The site is now covered by

OLD SHOTWICK CASTLE.
(*Now destroyed.*)

heather. There was probably no building of any kind, the fortification being composed entirely of mounds of earth. At Runcorn, according to the chronicler Higden, a castle was founded in 915 by Ethelfleda, but of this no remains are preserved. The rock on which it stood was called the Castle Rock, and had evidently been used for purposes of defence. A description derived from a resident was given in Hanshall's *Cheshire*, with a sketch of the Castle Rock and the supposed plan of the castle. Its position at what is called Runcorn Gap was evidently a strong one. A little later, that is in 920, Edward the Elder built a tower and castle "at Thelwall," so called, says Leycester, "from the stakes and stumps cut from the trees, wherewith it was environed about as a wall; and King Edward made it a garrison." Nothing is now left to indicate its position. On the Overton Hills at Frodsham, again, was a castle, where it is supposed that Randle Blundeville, Earl of Chester, resided in the early part of the thirteenth century, several of the charters granted by him being signed at that place. In 1654 the castle, which had probably been built on the foundations of the earlier building, was completely destroyed, the dead body of the owner, Earl Rivers, being discovered in the ruins. It is said that the building was of stone, with walls of immense thickness, and in the Norman style of architecture. A view of some small remains is to be found in Buck's *Antiquities* in 1727. At Northwich, we learn from the Harleian MSS., there was "a very stronge castell on the top of a verie high hill." Here again the name only is left behind, that portion of the town where it was situated being now called Castle Northwich, as it was once known as Castleton. From old documents we gather that there was an old castle at Dunham Massy before the present residence was built there: for Walter of Coventry records that "Haimo de Masci held the castles of Dunham and of Ullerwell." In the description given by Dr. Ormerod of the modern house in imitation of Italian

architecture, we are told that "it stood within gardens laid out in the stiff taste of the time, and surrounded by an ample moat, in the angle of which is a *large circular mound* with a modern summer-house on the top of it." It has been suggested that, from its form and situation, the mound was "the last relic of Haimo's Castle, and, like similar mounds in the other castles of Cheshire, the site of the Norman keep."

We come now to consider the castles of which we have some remains. Rocksavage Castle is not one of the ancient ones, for it was built by Sir John Savage, who died in 1597. It cannot therefore claim anything like the interest which attaches to the others. It was, in fact, a mansion rather than a fortress, just as we have the title given to other seats in the county, as Bolesworth Castle and Cholmondeley Castle. It occupied, however, a striking position, and it is to be regretted that so little of it now remains. It has been converted to agricultural purposes, and the stones have doubtless been used in the construction of other useful buildings. What was in 1640 described as a magnificent fabric is now a shapeless ruin, with no trace of its former glories. And glories it had, for in 1607 James I. and his train were entertained here, and his Majesty killed a buck in Halton Park. The property descended through the female line to the Marquis of Cholmondeley, and gives the title to the eldest son, who is called Earl Rocksavage.

Close to Rocksavage is Halton, which stands in an even more commanding position, its very name being said to imply as much, as meaning a town on a hill. The castle was probably built soon after the Conquest, as the barony was given by Lupus, the second Earl of Chester, to his cousin Nigel. Notwithstanding its situation, which rendered it a strong and important military post, no great historical event can be associated with it. The neighbourhood was indeed much infested with gangs of robbers at an early period, and in the reign of Edward II. these freebooters became so bold as actually to steal armour from

the castle itself.[1] Piers Plowman has the following as a proverb locally allusive :—

"Thoro the pas of Haulton
Poverte might pass whith oute peril of robbinge."

In the Civil Wars the castle was occasionally occupied by both parties, and in August 1644 the Parliamentary forces were in possession. Subsequently it became a prison for debtors for the honour of Halton. But though no account has come down to us of the castle having ever sustained a siege, it has interest for us from its connection with royalty. "Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster," was Baron of Halton, and when his son, Henry Bolingbroke, became King, the barony passed to the Crown. The King has the title of Baron of Halton as well as that of Duke of Lancaster. Three halmote courts were held here yearly, and one is still held annually of which an account is given in another paper in this volume. There are now few remains of the ancient buildings. The Survey in Cromwell's time describes them as being very ruinous. The gate-house has been altered or rebuilt and is now the Castle Inn, and is a picturesque building, and contains a room where the courts for the honour are held. The honour had jurisdiction over thirty-seven townships in Cheshire and over several in Lancashire. The records of this court are preserved, and give interesting information, whilst a paper read in 1858 by the late Mr. William Beamont of Warrington before the Chester Archæological Society contained many particulars as to the castle and its owners and its history.

Beeston Castle affords a most striking object to the traveller as he journeys from Chester to Crewe. It stands on a rocky insulated hill, rising in a regular and steep slope which terminates in a precipice. It was built by Ralph Blundeville, sixth Earl of Chester, "after he was come from the Holie Land," and is of irregular form, with a wall

[1] From Hanshall's *Cheshire*.

and eight round towers after the style introduced by the Crusaders. The upper ward occupies something less than an acre. The outer court includes a considerable space of ground, and is of an irregular shape, with several round towers. The keep is surrounded with a deep ditch, cut in the solid rock. The entrance was defended by two circular towers, still remaining, and the moat was crossed by a drawbridge. The approach under the gateway is very narrow, by rugged steps cut out of the natural rock. In the inner court is the draw-well, perfect, but now quite dry. It was emptied by directions of the late Lord Tollemache, and found to be 366 feet in depth. It contained nothing but rubbish, although stories were current of valuable treasures which had in bygone times been hidden there. The position of the castle is remarkable, and very similar to that of Edinburgh Castle, though the plateau there is much more extensive. The precipitous rocks on three sides seem to render it impregnable, but these cliffs were climbed by Captain Sandford, a devoted Royalist, with eight of his firelocks, on December 13, 1643. The castle bore its part in the Barons' War. In 1237 Henry III., before possessing himself of the Earldom of Chester on the death of John Scot, the last of the local Earls, seized on the castle, together with that of Chester, and placed it in the hands of Commissioners. In 1256 Prince Edward inspected the fortress, and put it and the Castles of Chester, Dissard, Schotewyke, and Vaenor in the charge of Fulco de Orreby, Justice of Chester. In 1264 the partisans of Simon de Montfort took possession of it, but in the following year it was recovered for the royal Earl. In 1399 King Richard III., just before he was dethroned, made it the repository of his treasure, which was subsequently transferred to Chester; but on Bolingbroke's advance it was abandoned by him. In 1406 the castle was given to the Duke of York. Eighty years later Leland describes the fortress as being in a state of ruin, and so it remained until the Civil Wars, when it was put in a state

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Beeston Castle.

of defence by a party of three hundred Roundheads in February 1642. From this time, until it was dismantled after the siege of Chester, it had many vicissitudes, falling into the hands of one party or the other, as is set forth in another paper in this volume. A contemporary writer gives the following description of its final surrender to the Parliamentarians on 16th November 1645: "After having sustained a siege of eighteen weeks, the garrison of fifty-six soldiers was driven to the greatest extremity, and had to surrender. Neither meat nor drink was found in the castle, but only a piece of turkey pie, and a live peacock and peahen." Sir William Brereton magnanimously made a treaty with the brave Royalist Governor of the castle, "that he and his men should be allowed to march from the castle with their arms, colours flying and drums beating, with two cartloads of goods, and be conducted with a convoy to guard them to Flint Castle. Twenty of the soldiers laid down their arms and craved liberty to go to their own homes, which was granted." Such an incident as this must awaken many memories as we gaze upon this ancient fortress. Now it rises up on its rocky promontory out of a fertile and grassy plain, presenting in its ruined walls a striking contrast to the scene below. A recent writer has said of it: "Excepting Warwick Castle there is perhaps no more interesting relic of feudal power in England than we behold in this famous and far-seen ruin."

We come last of all to the Castle of Chester. It is almost certain that the site occupied by it was outside the walls of the original Roman city, and may have been included in them either by later Roman builders, or when the city was repaired, enlarged, and beautified by that great builder, Ethelfleda, the daughter of King Alfred, in 907. At any rate the erection of the first Castle of Chester may safely be attributed to her. Though no trace of the work exists in Saxon masonry, it is fairly certain that the inner or upper bailey stands upon the earthworks thrown up by her, whilst the line of ditch that belonged to the mound on

which the flag-tower stood may still be discerned. In 1894 the late Mr. E. W. Cox was permitted by the commanding officer to make a minute examination of the modern buildings on the west side of the court. He satisfied himself that the lower storey of the flag-tower still existed enclosed within modern work, and that this was indeed the base of the Norman keep. This is the only evidence of Norman masonry having been erected on the site, and Mr. Cox formed the opinion that any other work of that period may have been of timber, often used by those early builders, as proved at Montgomery, Shrewsbury, Deganwy, and other places. We come now to the mediæval work, of which we have a portion preserved to us in the Julian Tower, beside the walls on the south and west. This tower is of three storeys, each room being vaulted in stone, the centre one having been the chapel. This is about 16 feet high, and the groins spring from slender pillars with capitals in the style of the thirteenth century. James II. heard Mass in this chapel on 27th August 1687. The building has for some time been used for storage. Some years ago traces of sacred paintings were found on the walls, but they have now entirely disappeared. A plan and sketch of the castle, made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, is in the British Museum. This gives us in the lower court the noble hall called Hugh Lupus' Hall, which was taken down about the year 1790. It was 90 feet long by 45 in breadth, and the roof was supported by woodwork carved in a bold style and resting on brackets. Adjoining this was the Exchequer, said to have been the Parliament House of the Earls of Chester. All these and the other buildings were swept away, and their place taken by the Assize Courts and County Buildings in the Grecian style of architecture. On either side of the square are now the quarters for the soldiers, a depôt of the Cheshire Regiment being quartered here. The County Prison, erected at the same time on the ground below between the castle and the river, has been removed. Although the remains of the old castle are so

OLD GATEWAY, CHESTER CASTLE.
(*Now pulled down.*)

slight, we are able from early drawings and prints to gather what it was like, and can thus form some idea of the loss, from a picturesque point of view at any rate, which the city sustained when it was deemed necessary to erect the present buildings.

But although the ancient buildings have gone, we may still call to mind some of the many historic scenes which have been enacted on the spot. We may picture to ourselves the warrior princess Ethelfleda, Alfred's daughter, resolved that Waste Chester should be a waste Chester no longer, raising up from the old ruinous heaps new fortifications, and enclosing within them a wider area, and erecting here within the re-arranged walls the earliest fort or castle. We can recall the stirring times of the Norman Earls, when the castle, much strengthened from the simple fort of Ethelfleda's time, was a valuable bulwark and rallying-point, especially in the frequent inroads of the Welsh. Here, too, Henry II. must have spent some time, when he was putting the Flintshire castles in order, before he set sail for Ireland from Shotwick. King John was in Chester, and presumably at the castle, in 1212, and left the city "an outlaw to all Christendom," to fight his rebellious barons. Chester and its castle played a prominent part in the stirring times that followed, and could tell of visits paid by Henry III. and Simon Montfort and others. Henry took over the earldom, the succession of the Norman earls having failed, which ever since has been a royal appanage. Edward I., first as Prince and afterwards as King, was here again and again; and with his Queen Eleanor attended a service of thanksgiving for his subjugation of Wales on May 26, 1293. In 1301 the castle was the scene of a grand ceremony, when the formal homage of the freeholders of Wales was paid to Prince Edward of Carnarvon, who was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester at the famous Parliament of Lincoln. Richard II. was here in 1394 on his way to Ireland, and again in 1396 when he granted Charter 22, and in the following year was

were to find books, vestments, vessels, and other ornaments of the church at their own cost. Baptismal rights for this parochial chapelry were not, however, gained until the year 1331, when Bishop Roger de Norbury granted to the inhabitants of the hamlet of Peover the use of a font (Lichfield Diocesan Registers, ii. f. 25).

In the original edition of Ormerod's *Cheshire* (1819) it is stated that it appears from the register book of Peover that the tower was built of stone in 1582, "John Bowden being then master of the work." It is added that "the two out-isles on either side of the chappel have been enlarged by the parishioners in late ages."

The present church is usually spoken of as the best example of a timber church now extant; but this is scarcely the case, for it underwent a vigorous restoration, accompanied by a considerable rebuilding of the outer walls, at the hands of Mr. Salvin in 1851–52. An account of this building, written shortly before the restoration, states that "The church is divided from the side aisles by four wooden arches on each side, formed by rude beams of wood springing from wooden pillars, from which, again, spring other spars, forming an obtuse arch over the nave. The principal part of the exterior is formed of timber and plaster, which presents a most picturesque appearance." Although the substantial timber framing, stained black, with the filling-up of white plaster, is almost entirely new, Mr. Salvin found the inner arcade work, just described, for the most part sound, and little more was done to it than the clearing away of several coats of whitewash. In an interesting account of the unrestored church by Rev. W. H. Massie, written about 1850, which appeared in the first volume of the Cheshire Archæological and Historical Society, it is stated that the mouldings of some of the window mullions, and more especially the ogee heads of doorways, pointed unmistakably to the erection of the timber church, as it then stood, in the fourteenth century.

The restoration under Mr. Salvin included the removal

MARTON CHURCH.

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of a western gallery and certain eighteenth-century sash windows and brick walling on the south side. Prior, too, to this restoration, the church was roofed with a flat debased ceiling covering the whole of the area. This ceiling was removed, and the church was again supplied with three high-pitched, gabled, and open roofs, of the original existence of which there was abundant evidence. The eastern ends of the aisles form chapels, known of old as the Hulme and Holford Chapels, and appropriated to the families of Shakerley of Hulme and Brooke of Mere. Both chapels are separated from the chancel and from the rest of the aisles by massive parclose screens of early Jacobean date.

Notwithstanding two somewhat severe restorations during the Victorian period, the church of Marton, which stands out prominently close to the roadside, with its somewhat imposing tower and spire, is certainly the most notable of the extant timber churches of Cheshire. In this case the exact date of much of the present fabric is known. The chapel of St. Paul's at Marton (for it remained a chapel of the widespread parish of Prestbury until comparatively modern days) was founded by Sir John Davenport in the year 1343. He endowed it with 60 acres of land, and the chaplain was to celebrate masses for himself, his ancestors, and his posterity. When Randle Holme visited this church in 1597, he noted that "In the Chapell yard lyeth there two monuments (of which rough drawings were given); it is said by ancient people that they were Sir John Davenport and Vivian, his son, who founded the chapell of Merton, 17 Edward III., and they lie buried there, obiit 31 Edward III., 1357." These monuments, or rather stone effigies, have rested under the tower since 1871. They are both much more mutilated, through their long sojourn in the churchyard, than they were in Randle Holme's days. It is said, though scarcely credible, that they were ejected from the church by ignorant Elizabethan Puritans under the supposition that the two knights were popish images!

The one on the north side, said to be Sir John Davenport, has lost both legs, but the feet rest on a lion; the head rests on a great helm crested with a man's head couped. The figure on the south side is very similar; one leg is missing. Both of them are undoubtedly of fourteenth-century date.

The church underwent some repairs in 1804, when the old roof was taken off and lowered. In 1850 there was a considerable and unhappy restoration, when the old two-light wooden-framed traceried windows of fourteenth-century date (one of them is drawn or described in Mr. Massie's paper just cited) were removed and plainer three-light windows substituted. A yet more considerable restoration took place, under Mr. Butterfield, in 1871, when the old north door was closed, the south porch rebuilt, and much new work introduced into the outer woodwork of the tower. Fortunately Mr. Massie's paper on the timber churches of the county is illustrated by drawings of the exterior and interior of Marton church, as well as of the inner timber framework of the tower, taken before Mr. Derrick, the architect of 1850–51, had begun his doubtless well-intentioned but sadly destructive work. From these it can be gathered that at that time the body of the fabric was much the same as when originally built by Sir John Davenport.

The substantial pointed wooden entrance on the west side of the tower basement, as well as the doorway within the south porch, appears to be fourteenth century. In the interior there are two substantial oak pillars on each side of the nave supporting arcades of three arches. These pillars are octagonal, with projecting moulded capitals, and from these capitals spring timbers forming an arch across the nave, as at Nether Peover. The dimensions of the nave are 37 ft. 9 in. in length, with a complete width of 33 ft. The church evidently underwent considerable alteration and improvement in the fifteenth century, at which time a substantial wooden tower was added at the west end, surmounted by a broached spire. The massive timber

Old Warburton Church.

framework to support the belfry and spire is carried out after the same fashion as the best of the wooden towers of Essex. It has a projecting course of buttressing timbers to the lower stage, which is covered with lean-to roofs. The interior measurements of the ground-plan of the tower are 23 ft. 9 in. north and south by 17 ft. 1 in. east and west. The outer uprights of the framework of this lower stage have an effective quatrefoil pattern at the head of each division just below the eaves. The last restoration was done on somewhat meagre lines, for several of these quatrefoils and other parts of the outer timbers are of black-painted deal. The roofing of this part is in stone slates, and the octagonal spire is shingled.

At the time of the restoration of the church in 1871, the chancel, which had been rebuilt in brick about 1800, was restored externally in woodwork. The whole of the outer black-and-white framework of the church now consists of uprights of timber, at a short distance apart, banded together by a horizontal transom, the intervals being filled up with plaster.

The pulpit seems to date from about 1625. The font is remarkable, consisting of a square leaden bowl or basin, enclosed in a square frame of oak. We suppose that this extraordinary font (which has more than once been ignorantly added to the list of old lead fonts) can only date from the restoration of 1871, for Sir Stephen Glynne's notes of 1853 name the font as "a plain octagonal bowl." There is a plain oak chest, 5 ft. 8 in. long by 1 ft. 9 in. broad and 1 ft. 10 in. high, with three hinges and three square lock plates; its date is *circa* 1550. At the west end are two eighteenth-century pictures of Moses and Aaron, painted on panels, with the Ten Commandments.

A short distance to the west of Marton lies the church of All Saints, Siddington, which was also a former chapel of Prestbury. It is usually stated that it was erected in 1474, but this statement is merely based on the fact that there was a bequest in that year by Robert Sydyngton to

that chapel. It is said that this church or chapel was originally entirely of timber and plaster, which may very probably have been the case; but at present it is only the chancel which is of that construction, together with the south porch and the belfry or square turret over the west end of the nave. The fabric was much restored in 1853–54, and again in 1895–96. At first sight the west front appears to be of an elaborate black-and-white half-timbered design, but it is in reality merely painted to produce this effect. The south porch has a wide arched entrance of old timber, formed of three pieces, and the inner doorway is of like construction and apparently *temp.* Henry VII. The interior of the plastered nave walls are painted to imitate half-timber work. The upright timbers of the chancel are about a foot apart. The east end has an interesting projecting piece of cored work over the three-light wooden-framed window. There is some old screen-work, and the pulpit is dated 1633.

At Warburton, on the northern confines of the county, close to the great Ship Canal, stands the old church of St. Werburgh, which was at one time entirely of timber; but there were some outer stonework repairs done to the west end of the nave in 1645, and a brick tower was added to the north-east of the church in 1711. The interior of the church and chancel afford remarkable examples of timber construction. The two bays of the nave are supported on each side by two great timber pillars, which have bevelled edges but no capitals. There is a space of 15 feet between them. A single high-pitch roof covers both nave and aisles. The timber details of the chancel, with its chapel on the north, are also somewhat exceptional, as appears in the plate and seem to be of somewhat later date than the nave. Among other quaint details of this interesting church, it may be mentioned that deer-horns are attached to the nave pillars to serve as hat-pegs. The large octagonal font is inscribed, "William Drinkwater, the Keeper, 1603"; it bears a wooden pyramidal cover, which has the date 1595 at the

SIDDINGTON CHURCH.

apex. The altar table, altar rails, and pulpit are all Jacobean. There is a simply-formed iron hour-glass stand near the pulpit. In the north chapel or small aisle of the chancel is a large stone coffin, over 7 feet long, also a much smaller one, about 3 feet long, a fine thirteenth-century grave cover, and some other remains which were found in the churchyard and placed here in 1819.

At Chadkirk, near Romiley, in the north-east of the county, there is an ancient chapel of very early foundation, as its name implies, which was doubtless at one time, as tradition has it, wholly of timber construction. It came in 1548 into the evil hands of Edward VI.'s commissioners, when its small endowment was confiscated to the Crown and the building itself dismantled under the plea of being a superstitious chantry. It was "raised out of its ruins" in 1747, "repaired, beautified, and a loft erected" in 1761; again repaired in 1860, and finally restored in 1876, as is stated on tablets within the walls. The nave is now of stone, after a Georgian fashion; but the small chancel, which has brick walling on the south, has interesting ancient oak and plaster work at the east end and on the north side, which is at least as old as the beginning of the fifteenth century.

It remains to say a word or two as to another ancient Cheshire chapel which up to about a century ago was described as being "wholly of oak and plaster." This was the chapel of High Leigh (West Hall), to the north-west of Knutsford. This chapel was pulled down in 1814, when a pretentious, classical substitute was erected on the site. A peculiarity of the old chapel was that it had no bell turret, but a single bell swung from the boughs of a great sycamore tree near its west end. The classical chapel was destroyed by fire in 1891, and in 1893 the church of St. John's, built on the same site, and chiefly constructed in black-and-white half-timber, was opened for worship.

In Ormerod's *Cheshire*, early in the last century, the church of Baddiley is described as "standing on a small

green within the same enclosure with the barns and other domestic buildings. It consists of a small nave and chancel, originally composed of timber. Another nave has been recently underbuilt with brick." The writer of these notes has not had the opportunity of seeing this small church, but it has apparently not changed during the century, for it is described in the *Little Guide to Cheshire* (1905) as consisting of "brick and timber," whilst in the introduction it is named as one of the half-timbered churches.

There are many traditions up and down the county as to various other parish churches or chapels having been originally timber-framed or of black-and-white work. In some cases these traditions are known to have been true. Thus Goostrey church was half-timber up to 1790 (probably from its foundation in 1230), when it was pulled down to make room for a brick successor; and Eccleston church was half-timbered up to 1808.

In several of the southern counties many of the stone or flint churches have timber belfries over the western gable of the nave,[1] but such a construction seems to have never been common in Cheshire. The church of Bruera, formerly a chapelry of St. Oswald's, Chester, a building of much interest, with traces of Saxon work, has a somewhat remarkable wooden belfry at the west end; it has been restored, but the older part of the timbers are of fourteenth-century date.

There was much timber-work in the smaller parish churches of Chester in the old days, as is shown by the pen-and-ink drawings of Randle Holme III. in the latter part of the seventeenth century (Harl. MS. 2073). The elaborate drawing of St. Peter's church shows that considerable civic building, known as the Pentice or pent-house, a great timber lean-to on the south side, rebuilt about 1500, but extant in another form as early as 1311; it was not pulled down until 1808. St. Martin's had a wooden belfry

[1] Such towers are to be seen at Warndon, Dornston, Kington, and Pirton in Worcestershire.—EDITOR.

Bruera Church, near Chester.

SMITH
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on the west gable and a timber porch on the south side, approached by a flight of steps of the like material. St. Olave's had also an elaborate wooden belfry on the west gable, which was taken down in 1693. St. Michael's had a considerable tower of timber at the west end, as well as a curious raised portico or room resting on wooden pillars over the west entrance. St. Bridget's is shown with a timber parapet, resting on projecting beams, encircling the base of the spire; all this was taken down in 1690.

Cheshire used to be a remarkably well-wooded county, and this is still the case in several districts. The area occupied by woods and plantations, according to the last woodland return of 1905, is 24,655 acres, and this takes no account of hedgerow timber or detached trees, for which the vale of Chester is so celebrated. The two chief royal forests of Cheshire were those of Mara and Moudrem, afterwards known as Delamere, about the centre of the county, and Macclesfield, on the south-east. The two parishes which have now the largest acreage of woodland are those of Delamere, 2596, and Taxal (below Macclesfield), 1285. There was a third forest district, namely, that of the Hundred of Wirral, that big projecting peninsula which juts out to the north between the Mersey and the Dee. The old term forest did not, however, imply a big wood, but simply a district reserved for royal hunting; and Wirral Forest was singularly destitute of timber, according to the old records, as it is at the present day. The parish of Woodchurch, not far to the south of Birkenhead, probably obtained its name in early days from being the only place within many miles which had a church of logs or timber-framing.

THE WALLS AND ROWS OF CHESTER

By the Archdeacon of Chester

ITS Walls and Rows (especially the latter) give to the city of Chester a character all its own. They are not only the pride of the inhabitants of the city and county, but they also afford an unfailing source of attraction to a constant stream of tourists and visitors. In no other town in the kingdom is it possible to make a complete circuit of the Walls, which involves a walk of nearly a couple of miles. That walk is a favourite promenade, and offers a pleasing and varying prospect not only of the different features of interest in the city, but also of the surrounding country, and of the distant Welsh hills. The Walls too furnish a never-ending subject for discussion as to their origin and history; upon which fresh light is continually being thrown by discoveries that are made. The main point in dispute has been as to whether they can claim any connection with Roman builders; and the question seems by some to have been settled in the affirmative on various grounds. Whilst Roman stones have been found in portions of the north wall when under repair, on the eastern side some masonry is to be seen which from its character may safely be ascribed to that early date; and quite recently some excavations, which were necessary for building operations, unearthed at that particular spot the foundations of the Roman wall just a few feet in front of the present one. The plinth thus discovered indicates that the place is the south-eastern angle of the Roman Wall, and proves what had been tentatively suggested, that originally and

in Roman times the compass of the Walls was considerably less than it is now. It has been suggested that at a later date the Romans enlarged the boundaries of the town, which at first was a camp or fortress, and that subsequently Ethelfleda, in 907, when she repaired the city, which had lain waste, still further enlarged its borders on the south side. On the west there are undoubted traces of Roman work, and here the Walls (or more correctly the Quay) in early days must have been washed by the tidal waters of the Dee, and vessels must have been able to come up close to them and moor at their side. The Roman stones discovered in the north wall when it was under repair, were many of them inscribed and sepulchral: and so some authorities concluded that they could not have been placed there by Roman builders. It was shown, however, that a similar use of a sepulchral monument occurred in a bastion of the Roman wall of London, and that none of these stones were found in the upper part of the wall, but in the lower unmortared base, which was evidently Roman. The conclusion arrived at was that the Romans had extended their wall at an early period, and, in doing so, had enclosed or made use of their cemetery. In confirmation of this theory, it may be stated that the surrounding masonry is of Roman character, and that a similar use of tombstones has been found elsewhere, as in a Roman edifice on the Roman Wall in England, and at Worms, and other towns in Gaul. As we walk round the Walls, then, to-day, we may remember that a considerable portion of them are on the foundations and lines laid down in Roman times.

The upper portion is no doubt Edwardian, though alterations and repairs at different times have somewhat altered their character. This is specially to be noted in the removal, at the close of the eighteenth century, of the old Gateways. These, as we can see from old prints, were striking and picturesque, if they were at the same time inconvenient. In York the Gateways (or Bars as they are

there termed) have been retained, and the convenience for traffic has been obtained by opening arches at the side of them and leaving the Bars untouched. We can only regret that the same policy was not adopted in Chester.

Each of the four gates was under the guardianship or sergeantry of particular persons. The North Gate, which contained the prison, was under the charge of the city authorities; the East Gate, given originally to Henry de Bradford, passed into the possession of the Crewe family. The sergeantry of the Water Gate descended through the Barony of Montalt to the Earl of Derby, and that of the Bridge Gate from the Rabys and Troutbecks to the Earl of Shrewsbury. Near each of these latter two gates are beautiful old specimens of half-timbered houses, where the sergeants or their deputies used to live. In addition to these principal gates, there were smaller ones or posterns, like the Ship Gate, which led to the crossing over the Dee—the New Gate, and the small Kale Yard Gate, which led to the monastic vegetable garden. There was also a further protection, at a distance of about a quarter of a mile on the road eastward, called the Bars, which has been removed many years ago, though the name is still preserved.

In early times a murage rate was levied for the maintenance of the Walls, and the officers who had charge thereof and collected and expended this money were called murengers. At one time a considerable sum was raised by the impost placed upon Irish linen, which was imported into Chester in large quantities.

As we walk round the Walls we can call to mind the scenes which must have been enacted on them when the city was attacked. In those days the walk was probably at a lower level, or at any rate the outer Wall was higher (and perhaps battlemented), thus affording protection to the defenders. At various distances were bastions and towers, some few of which remain, and enable us to form a better idea of the earlier condition of the city defences. In Roman

BONEWALDESTHORNE'S TOWER.

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times there was the additional protection of a ditch or fosse, and traces of this have been found in various places. When the Canal was made close to the North Wall the contractor found to his great advantage that much of the excavation out of the solid rock had thus been done for him.

The common gaol of the city was in the North Gate, and the prisoners there confined must have had very close quarters. A similar use of the North Gate was made at Canterbury (where the building still remains), and possibly in other places. Just outside the North Gate is the Hospital of St. John, and here in later years the prisoners attended divine service. A memorial of this is to be seen in the little bridge which crossed the fosse, now the Canal, and which has been sometimes called "The Bridge of Sighs." Not far from here westward is Morgan's Mount, with a lower chamber and an upper platform from which a fine view may be obtained. During the siege of the city a very important battery was planted here, and the site may well arouse memories of anxious and troublous times. Still further west is Pemberton's Parlour, so called from the fact that in 1700 John Pemberton established a rope walk here within the walls, and probably from this spot watched at times the operations of his workmen, or rested here after his own labours. Though now semi-circular in shape, it may once have been circular, with a passage through it. It also bore other names, as "Dille's Tower," or "The Goblin's Tower," the latter suggestive of a ghost story connected with it. An inscription on the city side records the repair of this portion of the Walls 200 years ago, and reminds us of those civic functionaries, the murengers, who had charge of the Walls. The north-west angle of the Walls is marked by Bonewaldesthorne's Tower, and connected with it by a battlemented curtain wall is the New or Water Tower. When the latter was built in 1323 it was washed by the waters of the Dee, and not long since the rings attached to it for the mooring of vessels might have been seen. At the present day the Tower rises out of gardens, and the

river is at some little distance away. Continuing our walk southwards we come to the Roodeye. Formerly, as its name implies, this was an island surrounded at high tide by the waters of the estuary, but it gradually silted up. In 1609 Mr. W. Lester, mercer, who was then Mayor, founded, chiefly at his own cost, the St. George's Race, which was to be run on St. George's Day. This was the origin of the Chester Races, which take place ordinarily in the first week in May, which would correspond with old St. George's Day. On its first foundation the race was introduced by a stately procession, in which certain emblematical characters took part, as well as the Mayor and Corporation "in their best apparell and in scarlet," and it was followed by a civic banquet at the Pentice. We may call up such scenes as these as we look over the Racecourse, and not content ourselves with imagining what things are like, when that busy throng comes to the Chester Races nowadays. Here, too, were at times presented the Miracle Plays and city Pageants, and Triumphs and other games, including that of football, promoted by the Company of Shoemakers on Shrove Tuesday, otherwise Goteddesse Day, which in 1539 was abolished *owing to its dangerous* character, foot races being substituted. We may think, too, of the training of soldiers here in Elizabeth's reign, and in recent years of the Yeomanry, until they were removed to Delamere Forest. As we reach the southern side, and see the waters of the Dee, we may picture to ourselves Edgar rowed up by the tributary princes to the Church of St. John, and in later times see the Walls manned by archers and other brave defenders, ready to resist the incursions of the Welsh. In short, the Walls are full of interesting memories, though only one event is chronicled in an inscription in stone, and that is on the Phœnix Tower, so called from the device of the Painters' and Stationers' Company, which is carved upon its south wall. It was from the top of the Tower that King Charles I. witnessed the defeat of his forces on Rowton Moor.

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King Charles's Tower.

But though only one event is thus definitely recorded, we can think of others—of the monks bringing in solemn procession the relics of St. Werburgh at some critical time of danger, and of the protection which these venerable Walls afforded to the dwellers in the city. Now indeed they afford a pleasant and enjoyable promenade, much frequented both by residents and visitors; but time was when they were an absolute necessity to secure the safety of the citizens, and needed to be jealously guarded by their watchmen, whilst the Gates which provided an entrance had their sergeants and keepers. And thus a walk round the Walls should not fail to suggest a contrast between the peaceful days in which we live, and the troublous and disturbed times which often threatened our forefathers.

If the Walls of our city possess this great interest for us, what shall we say of our Rows? They are practically unique. Other cities and towns have their Walls, but no other place, in England at any rate, has anything like the Rows. And their origin is veiled in obscurity. It is very difficult to give such a description of them as shall enable one who has not seen them to realise what they are like. The late Dean Howson spoke of them as "public highways passing through the front part of the drawing-rooms on the first floor of a series of houses, the windows being taken out, while the inner parts of these drawing-rooms are converted into shops, the bedrooms being overhead, and the passengers walking over the rooms of the ground storey, these rooms again being converted into shops." Mr. Pennant in his *Tour* gives this description, founded, as we shall see, upon a mistaken idea as to their origin:—"The principal streets run direct from east to west and from north to south, and were excavated out of the earth, and sunk many feet below the surface. The carriages are driven far below the level of the kitchens, on a line with ranges of shops, over which passengers walk in galleries, which the inhabitants call the Rows, secure from wet or heat. In the Rows are likewise ranges of shops and steps

to descend into the street." Without giving earlier descriptions, it will be gathered, that in the main streets within the city Walls there are covered galleries over the shops on the street level, which also are lined with shops. The walks in these galleries do not come quite to the street frontage, as opposite each shop there is, as a rule, a "stall," or sloping platform, on which goods may be exposed, though in some few instances this space is occupied by buildings of a permanent character. The stalls are protected from the street to which they are open by balustrades, some of which are of oak and of varying and handsome old patterns. As the shops represent different properties, there is a pleasing lack of uniformity about the Rows. In some instances we have the half-timbered architecture for which Cheshire is famous, in others houses of the date of Queen Anne; whilst in recent times some have been rebuilt and made more in accordance with modern requirements, though due regard has latterly been paid to the character of the ancient buildings. The walk in Eastgate and Bridge Street is continuous, and here are the best and principal shops; in the other streets the walk is interrupted by intervening lanes or streets, except on the south side of Watergate Street, where there are some very striking houses, such as "Bishop Lloyd's Palace," or "God's Providence House." The variety is also seen in the height of the colonnade, which is sometimes through the older houses quite low, and in the more modern ones much higher. On the west side of Bridge Street there is, in fact, barely headroom for a very tall person in some parts, but here there are no shops in the Row, so that the inconvenience is not felt. In the greater part of Northgate the Row, if it ever existed, has disappeared, and in another part it has recently been brought down to the street level, the under shops, which were really cellars, having been removed. The Rows thus, like the Walls, afford a favourite promenade for visitors. In rainy weather they give protection to those who have business to transact in the shops which line

Watergate Row, Chester.

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them; whilst "the stalls" afford a convenient position for witnessing any procession passing through the streets. We may even go back in thought to early days and imagine how they would be crowded with spectators when the Chester Plays were acted in the streets, or when the questionable sport (?) of bull-baiting took place before the Pentice at the High Cross. It is curious to know that the ownership of the property on the street level does not necessarily carry with it the ownership of the shop or house in the Row above.

In other parts of the city there are shops or houses where the first floor, supported by brick or stone arches or by wooden posts, is over the footway or pavement, and in the city accounts there are repeated entries of payments made for posts set up in the streets to hold up houses. Interesting examples of this are to be seen in Foregate Street and in Northgate.

The arrangement of the Rows is so singular, that much discussion has taken place as to their history and origin. Some have contended that they may be traced back to the Roman period, and that they were probably suggested by the common form of Roman building with a portico in front of them. Much ingenuity has been displayed by architects and others who urge this view in the drawings by which they seek to justify this contention. Stress, too, is laid by them on the fact that the Rows are confined to that part of the city which is of Roman origin, though this fact has been denied by those who adopt other theories.

The late Mr. John Henry Parker, F.S.A., in 1857, wrote as follows:—"The most probable origin of these Rows is, that after some great fire, it was found most convenient to make the footway on the top of the cellars, or vaulted substructures, instead of in the narrow streets between them. It was the usual custom in the towns in the Middle Ages to protect the lower storey, or cellar, which was half underground, by a vault of stone or brick. This was the

storeroom in which the merchandise or other valuable property was preserved. The upper parts of the houses were entirely of wood, and the whole of these being destroyed by fire, it was more easy to make the footway on the top of the vaults, leaving the roadway clear for horses and carts. Many of these vaulted chambers of the mediæval period remain in Chester, more or less perfect; some divided by modern walls and used as cellars, others perfect and used as lower shops or warehouses." This theory, again, is ingenious, and has this justification, that in 1114 a large part of the city was destroyed by fire; but against it may be urged the fact that one of the most perfect, and probably the oldest of these crypts (the house or shop in which it is being called "Ye Olde Crypt"), is not in the street front, but beneath the back portion of the house. Others have supposed that the original ground-level of the city was the same level with the Rows, and that the streets were gradually worn down to their present level through the solid rock. This opinion has, however, been shown to be untenable, inasmuch as in Bridge Street, Watergate, and other parts, Roman remains have been discovered which show that in Roman times buildings were even a little below the present street level, and that the foundations of the Roman buildings correspond practically with the height of the roadway. Archdeacon Rogers, at the end of the sixteenth century, urged that the Rows were constructed for defensive purposes, and would be found useful in this way in the time of Welsh incursions. We have, however, no record of the Welsh having ever effected an entrance into the town, so that the precaution would seem to have been superfluous. Canon Morris, in his valuable work (*Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor Periods*), advances another theory at some length to account for the gradual development of the Rows from the seldæ, or moveable sheds, on the street level, and the shops built on the higher ground behind, formed of the debris of Roman buildings which had been destroyed. These are some of the

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Bishop Lloyd's Palace, Watergate Row.

ideas which have been propounded as to the origin of the Rows. It is well to state them, so that our readers may gather what a fertile source of interesting discussion they furnish. Mr. Henry Dawes Harrod, F.S.A., after carefully examining these explanations, and the arguments on which they were based, came to the conclusion that we must look to ancient Chester for the origin of the Rows, and so go back to Roman times. His contention is not unlike that of Canon Morris, only he gives an earlier date. He says: "The shop of the ambulatory, with its covered way, is perpetuated in the shop in the Row. The stall for traders on the steps finds its lineal descendant in the shop in the streets. The covering over the Rows has given way before the growth of the houses to the front, economising space, and affording better living accommodation. Without any great revolution in design or architecture, the Rows have developed by a natural growth on the lines of the ancient design of Roman Chester."

"When doctors differ who shall decide?" It may not be possible to come to a definite conclusion on the matter; but, personally, I think that the contention of Mr. Harrod, advanced in a paper read before the Chester Archæological Society on 19th February 1901, and supported by arguments and illustrations, is a most reasonable one, which at any rate commends itself to my humble judgment. The mere mention of these various theories may perhaps lead some of our readers to take even greater interest in the Rows of Chester, and remind the dwellers in both city and county that in them they possess a great and unique treasure.

THE HALF-TIMBERED ARCHITECTURE OF CHESHIRE

By C. H. Minshull

"He that hewed timber out of the thick trees: was known to bring it to an excellent work."

ALBEIT this paper is to confine itself to the domestic or secular side of the subject, and this quotation might even more suitably serve as his text by the author treating exclusively of the ecclesiastical examples of timber-framed buildings, yet its appropriateness may warrant these words forming a sort of superscription for what is after all part and parcel of one theme.

While it may be conceded that Cheshire can count many extant memorials of greater historic importance and of longer lineage than any of those remaining recorded in that particular kind of "black and white" coming within our present immediate purview, it may nevertheless be claimed that these specimens of the carpenter's craft constitute by no means the least charming and characteristic of the county's architectural possessions.

The "post and panel" work, the "magpie" style, to use the sobriquet sometimes familiarly applied to it, so plentifully strewn throughout its length and breadth, does certainly bring a very distinct contribution to the picturesqueness of the Palatinate, whose now fertile plain, studded with these timber structures, is where buildings of this traditional type most do congregate. Indeed, it is a question whether they do not serve to connote Cheshire quite as much as that prosaic product the cheese, which has

made the name and fame of the county a household word! Another proof of the identification of the county with the kind of buildings under consideration is that when a building is referred to as being in the "Cheshire style," the description is always understood as implying a half-timbered erection, and at the same time goes to show that its designer has been paying his tribute of imitation to and admiration of the manner and method, which formerly was so felicitously employed in several parts of the country, but in none more extensively than in Cheshire—a fact happily still capable of demonstration in the frequency of surviving examples.

Many a piquant touch of contrasted colour does the landscape owe to these delightful buildings, one of whose attractive qualities resides in just that faculty of focussing the eye they so eminently possess. Here it may be a cluster of quaint cottages, or perhaps a single cottage of comely proportions nestling in some sequestered spot, or one of those moated granges or sturdy farmsteads that dot the countryside; or there it may be a more elaborate and ornate example, some "stately home," attesting the skilful handiwork of the *faber lignarius* who centuries ago followed his calling with such excellent and enduring results, his fitly and soundly framing of the building together having enabled it to withstand the action of time and weather—if so be by good fortune it managed to escape that more fatal enemy fire, whose ravages are no doubt responsible for the disappearance of many an architectural treasure, which, had a more resistant material been employed, might have survived to shed additional lustre on the county, already so renowned for its half-timbered treasures.

The explanation of the prevalence of this species of building, and of Cheshire having become *par excellence* a centre for it, is, of course, to be found in the fact of the county having possessed an abundance of raw material in the "thick trees" ready to the hand of the hewer.

In his *Story of some English Shires*, as told by the late Dr. Mandell Creighton, speaking of the physical features

of Cheshire, he says: "Three great forests covered much of the surface of the ground. From Chester to the sea stretched the forest of Wirral, from the Mersey to the Dee extended the forest of Delamere, and the forest of Macclesfield formed an impenetrable barrier between Cheshire and Derbyshire"; and he adds a remark not altogether irrelevant to the matter in hand: "There was so little agriculture that the men of Cheshire used to leave their homes and serve as harvesters in districts where corn was grown, in the same way as did Irish labourers in our own days." These copious sources of timber have long since disappeared, and the once afforested area has given place to those broad acres under cultivation now covering the county.

In *Domesday Book*, under CESTRESCIRE, these forests are often referred to, but we are left to conjecture what were the trees growing in them; doubtless there was the ash and the elm, and also "the monarch oak, sole king of forests all," ready to hand for those who, in the elder days of the carpenter's art, erected the dwellings from which those later buildings now being considered are either lineal or collateral descendants. The earliest extant of these may only carry us back some 500 years, but this had not only Norman but Anglo-Saxon progenitors. It is well known that the latter employed both in their churches and houses timber as their staple building material, and although all these have perished there remains the testimony of their language; the Saxon word "timbran" signified to build with wood, and builder meant carpenter. Their rude halls may be regarded as the origin of the old English timber-built houses.

The oldest form of rectangular house was erected in "bays," the simplest form of construction being the house of one bay. Two pairs of bent trees (whence the term "roof tree" seems an outcome) were set up in the ground about 16 feet apart, each pair making a sort of pointed arch, united at their apexes by a longitudinal beam. The gable

end of many an old Cheshire cottage shows the persistence of this traditional type.

Before bringing under review some few of the many specimens the county contains, a word or two with regard to their method of construction may not be out of place. Scarcity of stone and difficulties of transit account for this material being so sparingly used. Upon a few courses of stonework forming a plinth, horizontal beams were laid, and into these angle posts and intermediate uprights were framed. These carried the sill of the upper storey, whose floor joists were often made to project, producing the "overhang," frequently coved, which is one of the most effective features of the style.

It is not, however, so much the general disposition of their main timbers as the varied patterns and devices of the panels filling in the intervening spaces that provides one of the distinguishing characteristics of these Cheshire buildings. As one may often determine a person's native place by his dialect, so do these lozenges and other chequer patterns enable one to recognise the place of their origin; they are, as it were, a sort of idiomatic architectural expression. When the carpenter had finished the skeleton of the structure, there remained, to complete the wooden walls, the filling in of the interstices of the framing. For this purpose, what is known as "wattle and daub" was commonly employed. By this primitive process clay could be used in its natural state. The method was to make a foundation by interlacing osiers or hazel twigs, thus forming a sort of basket work, and then to daub over with clay mixed with straw or some stringy weed, and upon this put a thin coating of plaster on both the inside and outside faces. In his *Cheshire Glossary*, Colonel Egerton Leigh remarks, "The daub seems to have given a name to a trade," and in support of this statement a quaint old couplet is quoted:—

> "The mayor of Altrincham and the mayor of Over,
> The one is a thatcher, the other a dauber";

and then follows this favourable comment on the old process: "Clay, being a non-conductor, makes a warm house in winter and a cool one in summer."

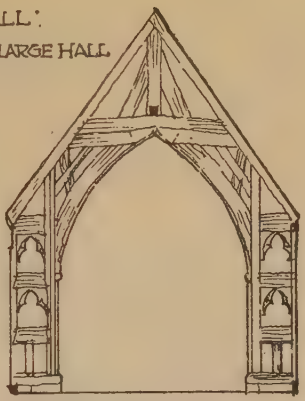
Whether this "post and panel" work originally presented the study in black and white it now does, is open to question. Most likely the tarring of the timbers was resorted to rather with the object of preservation than with the intention of producing the contrasted effect between the wood and the plaster, now so conspicuous a characteristic. It may be that the dark brown and yellow ochre colour combination one sees in the corresponding manner of building on the Continent was more like the original appearance of these Cheshire buildings. Space forbids going into side issues and demands the taking into consideration some of the specimens of the "excellent work," in which the county is so rich as to make the task of selection by no means easy.

The mere enumeration of notable examples would occupy many pages, and to deal with them in detail according to their deserts would call for a treatise instead of this cursory survey. But for a complete chronicle, is there not Ormerod's *magnum opus?*—that mine of information and monument of industry which is indeed itself one of the county's "memorials"; and for pictorial treatment there is that gallery of vivid illustrations, Nash's *Mansions of the Olden Time*, wherein are to be seen, splendidly set forth, several of Cheshire's celebrated "stately homes," both as regards their outward aspect and their interiors, and containing, moreover, counterfeit presentments of their former occupants in their habits as they lived.

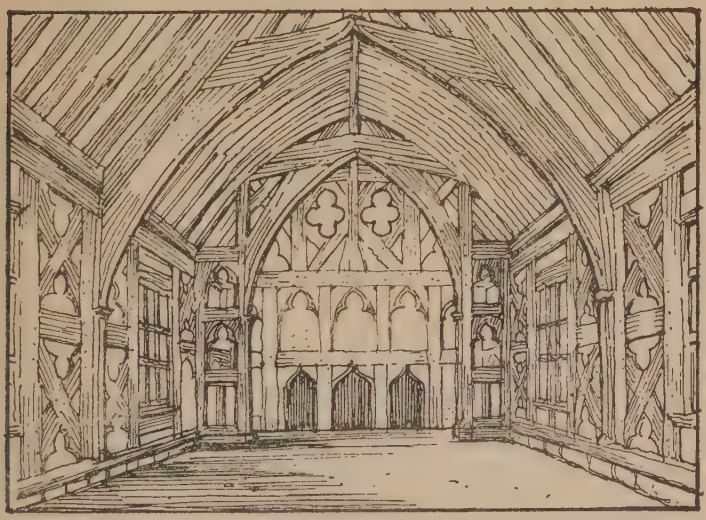
Any one unable to visit the actual building and desirous of getting an idea of their peculiar charm, aye and the splendour, of these fine old halls of Cheshire, would be well-advised to turn to that artist's views of Bramall, of Adlington, and of Moreton, which constitute a trio of half-timbered treasures not perhaps surpassed by any buildings of their kind in any other county, or indeed country.

BAGGILY HALL.
SECTIONS THRO' LARGE HALL.

SECTION SHEWING KITCHEN END



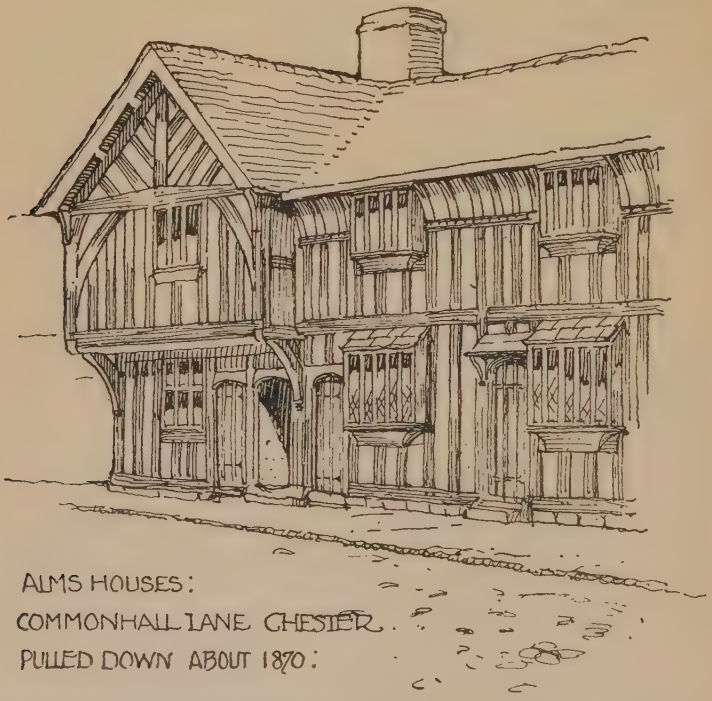
SECTION SHEWING SPERE OF SCREEN.



INTERIOR OF THE HALL. BAGGILY HALL. CHESHIRE.

By right of seniority, as well as by reason of uniqueness, Baguley or Baggily Hall, in the neighbourhood of Stockport, claims first consideration. In Parker's *Domestic Architecture*, remarking upon the difficulty of finding timber houses of the fourteenth century, Baggily is referred to as a "rare example."

On this account and because of its intrinsic interest,

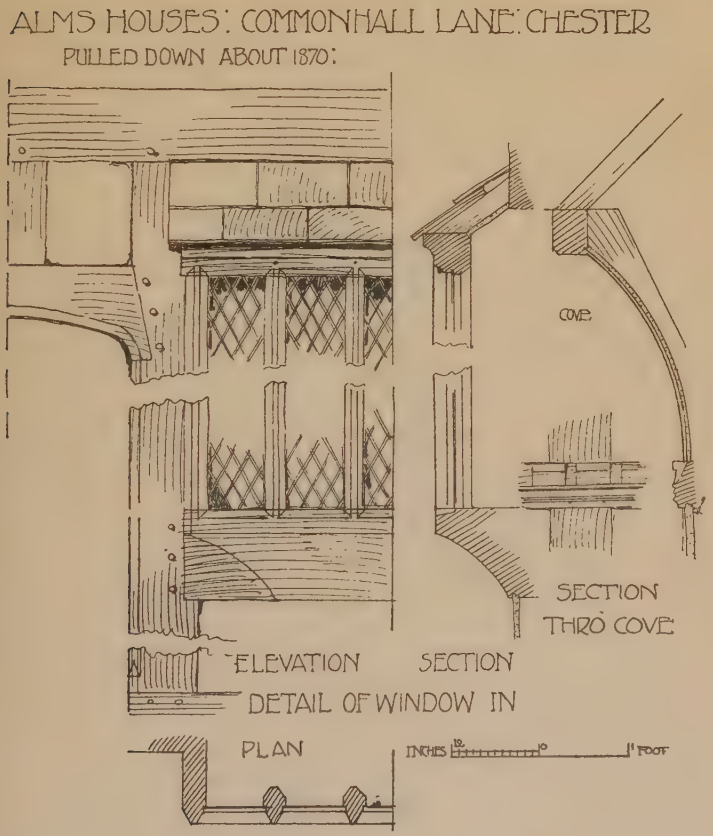


ALMS HOUSES:
COMMONHALL LANE CHESTER.
PULLED DOWN ABOUT 1870:

it is now illustrated by two sectional views and by a sketch of the interior showing the purely Gothic spirit of its open-timbered roof, and giving an idea of the massiveness of its oakwork.

There being but few surviving specimens for the purposes of further illustrating the period between the reign of Edward III., when Baggily was built, and that

of Elizabeth, certain almshouses from Commonhall Lane, Chester, dating from about the time of Henry VII., may with advantage be here adduced. Unfortunately they are no longer standing, but, before they were pulled down



some forty years ago, drawings were made which have rendered possible their reconstruction by means of this sketch; and by the reproduction of the window details to show the distinctive character of this earlier type of timber work.

It is on reaching the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth that there is no longer any paucity but a positive profusion, and there ensues an *embarras de choix* in the examples available.

Her reign and that of her immediate successors constituted what may perhaps be called the classic era of half-timbered architecture. A period of not much more than a hundred years sufficed for the style to attain its zenith and reach its decline and passing in the seventeenth century.

The frequency with which one comes across the royal cipher E. R. and the many corroborative arms and date panels, both in Cheshire and elsewhere, bring to mind the marvellous outburst of energy and activity that marked her times in all departments of life, one of whose outlets was in the building operations of the period, and especially in the domestic direction, some of the evidences of which we are now concerned with. England, as has been truly said, is awake after the slumber of the Middle Ages, and for a brief period the national life blazes with unprecedented brilliance and splendour.

Adherence to the traditional manner of timber building in Cheshire would be accounted for and be encouraged by the abundant supplies of the requisite raw material still available; for this and the adjoining counties of Shropshire and Lancashire, where this type of building also flourished, were at a safe distance from the iron-smelting works and ship-building yards which made such inroads on the woods and forests in other parts of the kingdom.

In the attractive appearance of those Elizabethan erections, that Baconian dictum (certainly challengeable, at all events, from an architect's standpoint), "houses are built to live in and not to look on," found plenty of contemporary refutation in the picturesque and delightful halls of this county.

As in the Edwardian Baggily Hall, so in its Elizabethan successors the "great hall" continued to be the chief feature, the principal pivot, so to say, of the general

plan. But, whereas in the earlier examples it was invariably open right up to the roof, it gradually began to be divided into two storeys by the interposition of a floor.

BRAMHALL: THE PORCH E END.

One consequence of this change was the disappearance of the minstrels' gallery and the dais. The cause of the decline in importance of the great hall may partly have been the introduction of Italian ideas, but was mainly due to the alteration in the habits of life. The progress of

civilisation brought with it the multiplication of apartments, and hence the space once entirely occupied by the lofty hall could no longer be afforded.

An exemplification of this is provided by Bramall, where

BRAMHALL:
A CORNER OF THE SOUTH WING.

the "great hall" has a flat ceiling, and above this is the drawing-room; an apartment growing rapidly into importance in Elizabethan times. This upper chamber, as is the case of Bramall, becomes more handsomely treated with

raised plaster and other ornament, and is, moreover, much loftier than the hall below it. Access was by means of a spiral staircase of solid blocks of oak. Bramall, like other contemporary halls of its class, was originally built in quadrangular form; but when peaceful times came, the owners, desiring a more open outlook, secured this by doing away with one side of the quadrangle, and with it swept away the gate-house. The south-eastern wing contains, as houses of this period commonly do, a domestic chapel and also the fine banqueting room. One of its most noteworthy features, "the long gallery," of which Ormerod gives a sketch, has disappeared. Bramall originally belonged to the Bromeales or Bromhals, but passed by marriage to the Davenports as far back as the reign of Edward III. From the sketches an idea of the general rich character of the timber framing can be gathered. Rivalling it in some respects, one may next mention Moreton or Little Moreton Hall, near the Staffordshire border. It is surrounded by a moat spanned by a stone bridge, and sentinelled by a gatehouse of striking proportions, through which one enters the courtyard, where the many-angled bays at once arrest attention.

By whom they were contrived or, at all events, actually constructed, and when, can be learned from the inscriptions carved above the upper windows, which run thus:

"God is al in al thing."

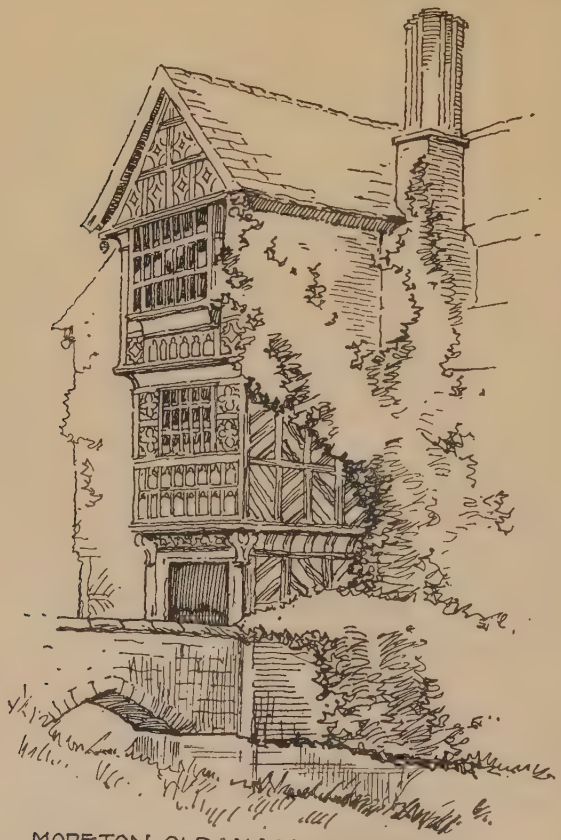
"This windows whire made by William Moreton in the yeare of Oure Lorde mdlix."

"Richard Dale Carpeder made thies windows by the Grac of God."

Vying with these charming bays in interest and importance, there is occupying the entire length of the main wing a magnificent room on the topmost (the third) floor which, tradition has it, was graced by the presence of Queen Elizabeth, and danced in by her Majesty.

It is at such places as Moreton Hall, with its fine

ballroom, to quote some reflections which resulted from an architect's—the late Mr. H. Taylor, of Manchester—study of this old house, we see the provisions made in the past for enjoying life in the country. In this old house the



MORETON OLD HALL: GATEHOUSE.

disturbed state of former times is brought vividly to our minds if we have sufficiently narrow shoulders to creep through the sliding panel into the apartment which was a harbour of refuge for those whose life was in danger. When hotly pursued, the fugitive escaped down a sort of

well and through an underground passage. At Moreton Hall, built when Italian ideas were creeping into the country, it is instructive to notice how the architect was apparently puzzled by the conflicting principles of our humble and beautiful Gothic and of the more pretentious

MORETON HALL.
IN THE COURTYARD.

Italian style, *e.g.* the ballroom, which is on the third storey, has an open-timbered, pointed roof, with a thrust upon the walls. This thrust he evidently thought it not proper to counteract by buttresses as his brethren a hundred years before would have done, and from this cause the stability of the building has for some time been threatened. The inhabitants at Moreton, we cannot but feel, must have been put to sore inconvenience many a time, inasmuch as

no one had then invented corridors, and so there are four or five staircases. This arrangement must have been very disagreeable on a wet night, as the bedrooms could only be reached from different sides of the building by crossing the courtyard with or without candles or lanterns. Much as one is tempted to linger at Moreton, there is that other member of the famous triad of half-timbered treasures on this side of the shire awaiting consideration—Adlington. This is the home of one of Cheshire's oldest families, in whose possession it has remained for many centuries. Of considerable exterior interest and entered by an admirably-proportioned, two-storeyed porch, it is, however, the interior of the great hall that constitutes its chief glory. A very noticeable feature is the cove-shaped panelling that runs right across one end and contains a large number of shields of arms of the various families connected with the house of Legh.

The roof is of remarkably fine character with principals of hammer-beam design, and is a most effective and decorative piece of richly-moulded carpentry and carved work; the whole having an obviously Gothic character.

Upon some other "memorials" in this part of the county, all deserving to be dealt with at length, a very brief reference is all that can be bestowed — the little priest's house at Prestbury, with its quaint and curious square-ended bays and four-way gables; Gawsworth Hall, now the rectory, with its remarkable three-storeyed octagonal bay; Handforth Hall, displaying a finely carved doorway; Alderley Edge with its farmhouse, "Eagle and Child" Inn, and cottages, with gables dressed out in the local fashion of draughtboard or chequered devices.

Of these examples it may be said that, while they all may have a certain family likeness, yet each possesses an individuality of its own, needing but a closer acquaintance for recognition and appreciation.

To pass to the opposite corner of the county, the Wirral. Contrary to what might have been expected,

having regard to the fact that the whole of this peninsula, "from Blacon Point to Hilbree," was formerly one continuous thickly-wooded tract, the region yields practically nothing of half-timbered work. The deforesting which took place under Edward III. may be mainly answerable for the absence alluded to.

This district did, however, once possess in a home of the Stanleys, Hooton Hall, what Ormerod describes as "a very large quadrangular building in timber," and of which he gives an illustration. It was demolished in 1778, and in its stead stands the present stone-built successor.

Mid and Southern Cheshire well make up for the Wirral's shortcomings.

To cite but a couple, Carden Hall and Broxton Old Hall. The former must have been a superb example, beautiful alike in situation and in itself; though now somewhat marred by sundry modernisings. Its neighbour, Broxton, has undergone restoration, but retains a good amount of the original framing. As fairly representative of its kind, a detail of a gable is given, "*ab uno disce omnes.*"

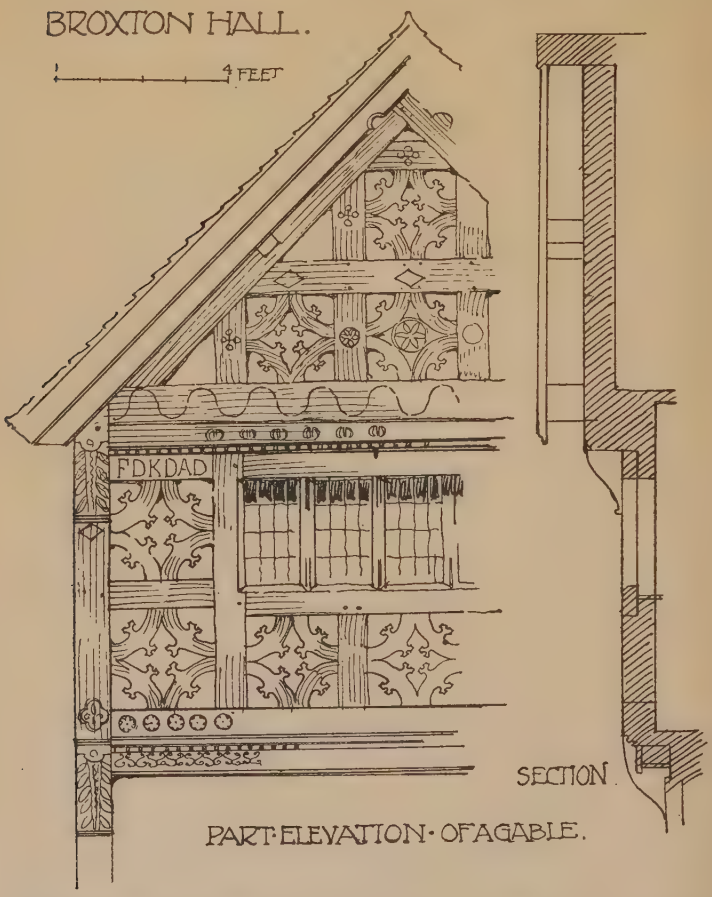
Seeing that several towns capable of supplying scores of opportunities for pursuing our subject—*e.g.* Stockport, Sandbach, Middlewich, and Nantwich—have been left out of sight, it is obvious that not a tithe of the county's wealth has been touched upon in this slight survey.

If, however, none of these towns has been laid under tribute, a similar course with respect to the capital city would be indefensible.

Inasmuch, however, as Chester's half-timbering has so often been dealt with from the standpoints of antiquary, artist, and architect, more than an abbreviated review seems unrequired, and anything like a complete *catalogue raisonné* uncalled for of the possessions of what must once have been a veritable "black and white" city, and can still claim to be one of the chief places for studying the style.

Chronologically the Chester timber buildings may not

number any quite comparable to Shrewsbury's "Butcher's Row"; howbeit there is at least one example running that noted Gothic specimen fairly close, as regards age, at



all events—the house at the corner of Castle Street being probably one, if not *the* earliest—(*pace* a placard on the seventeenth-century house in Lower Bridge Street proclaiming *it* to be the oldest house, adding a mere matter of 600 years by converting the figure six on the beam into

a nought! and by this doctored date duping, it is to be feared, many an unsuspecting visitor!).

This corner house is closely associated with the names of those Chester worthies, the Randle Holmes, of heraldic and antiquarian renown. An examination of the mouldings and other details of this house points to it having been erected in Tudor times.

Happily still confronting us in Lower Bridge Street is that old hostelry known as the "Falcon," and also "The Bear and Billet," once the town house of the Earls of Shrewsbury and Talbot. The former has a most engagingly picturesque appearance, with an effective row of quatrefoils under the range of many-mullioned windows. Looking at the proportion of the fronts of both these buildings taken up by their ranges of windows, stretching from side to side, brings to mind that Derbyshire doggerel, coined to suit a somewhat like case—

"Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall."

Some reference must be made to the famous fronts in Watergate Street, where is "God's Providence House." About the only piece of the original timber work remaining is the beam with the inscription reminiscent of the plague, which in 1647 so ravaged the city.

Lower down the street is "Bishop Lloyd's Palace" with its series of panels containing interesting and quaint renderings of sacred subjects. Further down the street one comes to Stanley Palace, which now has no frontage to the street, and hides the attraction of a fine flank up a passage. This is a notable specimen of Jacobean Renaissance as applied to timber work, showing but few traces of the almost forgotten Gothic which dictated its construction.

Among the minor examples may be mentioned a row of quaint little dwellings in Park Street facing the city walls. Of these "Nine Houses" but six are now standing. They have suffered from the insertion of incongruous sash windows, but this has not deprived them of all their interest.

One may still admire the handiwork of the old carpenters

HOUSE: WHITEFRIARS: CHESTER.

who there so effectively employed the billet-moulds to the timbers and the chevron cutting on the beams.

Exemplifying a later manner and different treatment,

the house in Whitefriars is reserved as the last of this brief review. This bit of seventeenth century work with its widely overhanging upper portion, and the raised plaster ornament in the gables, with the date 1658, may claim to be regarded as not the least interesting of the "memorials" we have been considering.

Those who esteem the half-timbered work as among the county's chief antiquarian attractions and architectural assets—indeed all who feel the fascination of the style—cannot but welcome the reversion to the type and the revival of the manner in recent years.

Among the patrons of the building arts none was more susceptible to the peculiar charm of this "nogging-work" than the late Duke of Westminster, who caused to be erected on his Eaton estate numerous buildings faithfully reproducing the forms and features of their Cheshire prototypes. In this work his Grace was fortunate in having at command the services of an architect, Mr. John Douglas, than whom no one has been more successful in recapturing the spirit of the old timber-work. To the late Duke's liking for and desire to keep up the "Cheshire style" of architecture, Chester itself owes much that has been done towards preserving and also perpetuating the traditional character of its buildings. It is a matter for congratulation that the lead given has been so loyally followed, both by the Corporation and by the citizens. Another notable instance of revival is to be seen at Bidston Court in the Wirral; when this fine half-timbered house was built a few years ago, an actual and accurate reproduction of those bays at Old Moreton Hall was embodied therein.

By way of summing up the subject, the following words from Ruskin may perhaps be not out of place:—

"If indeed there be any profit in our knowledge of the past, or any joy in the thought of being remembered hereafter, which can give strength to present exertion or patience to present endurance, there are two duties respecting national architecture whose importance it is impossible to overrate: the first, to render the architecture of the day historical; and, the second, to preserve, as the most precious of inheritance, that of past ages."

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AN OLD CONSISTORY COURT

By the Archdeacon of Chester

THE title of this chapter may possibly suggest to the reader that it will unfold some startling records of the proceedings which have been enacted in one of those ecclesiastical institutions called a Consistory Court. Let me at once dispel such anticipation. Though a search into the dusty documents which have accumulated might reveal some interesting details of some *cause célèbre*, and disclose and hand on to future generations some forgotten page of history, my purpose is much less ambitious, for it is rather with the building and interior arrangement of the Court than with its legal proceedings that I propose to deal.

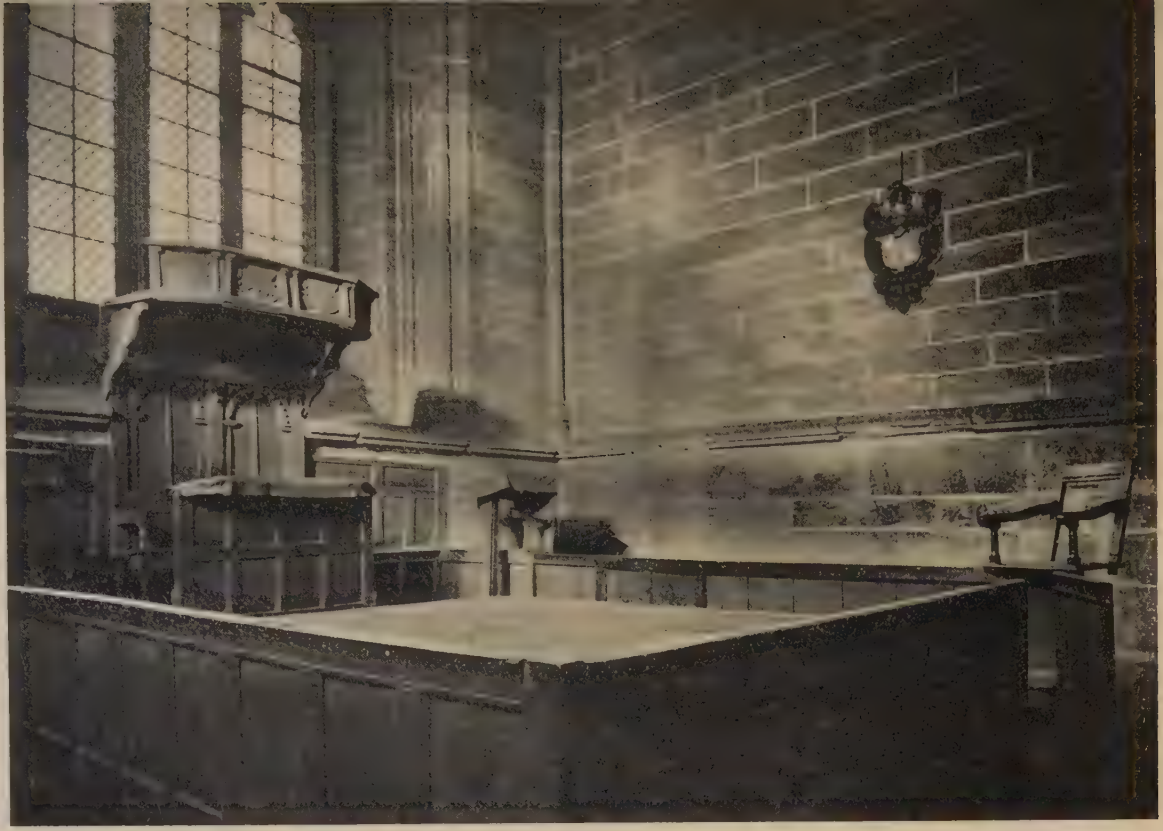
One of the most interesting features of Chester Cathedral is, that it gives us specimens of every style of architecture, except, indeed, the Saxon. You have Norman work in the remains of S. Anselm's Church and buildings; exquisite examples of Early English in the Lady Chapel and Chapter House; Decorated and Perpendicular of every period in the Choir, Nave, and great South Transept; and Jacobean in the Consistory Court and in some minor details. It is of the latter that we are about to treat.

The visitor to the Cathedral, as he enters by the south-west porch, may see on his left a plain nail-studded door, reached by three steps, and set in a stone screen surmounted by heavy ornamental masonry of the date of the seventeenth century. The doorway and wall may have been built in the sixteenth century, when the unfinished south-west tower was projected and commenced, but the superincumbent

balustrade is at any rate later, and bears the date 1636, and on a small shield the initials "J. B."—clear indication that it was erected by John Bridgman, who was Bishop of Chester from 1619 to 1650. It is through this door that the Consistory Court, which is, in fact, the basement of the unfinished tower, is reached. Comparatively few visitors to the Cathedral ever see this portion of it. One reason for this may be that it is not under the complete control of the Dean and Chapter like the rest of the building. The Consistory Court is the Bishop's Court, and the papers contained therein are under his jurisdiction, and it would not do for the general public to be admitted indiscriminately, unless they were stored in safe receptacles. A Consistory Court implies a Bishop; in fact, "a consistory is the court of a Bishop, in which the principle is that he is surrounded by representatives of the clergy of his diocese, who act as his council. In modern times, however, the Consistory Courts of Bishops are held by deputy, the Chancellor of the diocese or one of his surrogates being the sole representatives of the Bishop and clergy." Until the foundation of the See of Chester in 1541 there would, of course, be no Consistory Court in Chester, unless, indeed, the Bishop of Lichfield, who at one time had a throne or seat in S. John's Church, ever had one there. When the Abbey Church became the Cathedral of the new See, it would seem that the Lady Chapel was used as the Consistory Court. At any rate it was here that George Marsh was tried and condemned to death in 1554, when George Cotes was Bishop. In *The Life of Bridgman* there is an allusion to this original position of the Court, when it is stated that Mrs. Bridgman was buried "at the east end of the church, next to the *old* Consistory Court, which is now called our Ladye's Chapel." Whether the Court was moved to the place it now occupies before Bishop Bridgman's time, I cannot say. He, at any rate, put up the screen (or the upper portion of it) which separates it from the south aisle, as is shown by the date and by

the arms of the Bridgman family. The Bishop was responsible for many repairs and improvements in the Cathedral, and "in the Pallace of the Bishop which was in great decay"; and in a manuscript in the University Library at Cambridge, there is a full and interesting account of what he did in this respect. Curiously enough no mention is made of this screen or of the fittings of the Court, and yet both undoubtedly were due to him, and erected in his time. He may have rightly thought that the basement of this tower at the west end of the church was a more seemly and fitting place for the holding of a Court, even though the business conducted there was ecclesiastical, than the chapel at the east, which was designed and used for the most sacred offices of religion. It may be said here that it is not an uncommon thing for the Consistory Court to be a portion of the Cathedral. This is the case at Carlisle, Durham, Chichester, Hereford, Lichfield, Llandaff, Peterborough, Ripon, and Winchester (and this list may not be exhaustive), though the exact position of the Court in the church varies considerably.

On entering the Court, the visitor cannot fail to be struck with the old-world scene before him as he looks upon the fittings, which were put up 270 years ago. There is a square enclosure, surrounded by a partition of oak some four feet high. To this there are entrance-doors at each corner. Inside a seat is fixed all round this partition, the central space being filled with a large square table covered with a green cloth. At the west side, reached by three steps, is the raised seat for the Chancellor, with a desk in front of it. The seat is sufficiently wide for two persons, so that the Chancellor might have an assessor by his side. The judgment-seat is flanked on either side by another seat with a smaller desk before it. It is rendered imposing by an elongated oak canopy with a carved cornice and by the Jacobean panelling which supports it. The cornice is, unfortunately, not quite perfect. A portion is missing on the south side, and on the north



Consistory Court, Chester Cathedral.

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a piece has been cut away. The arms of the Bridgman family are to be seen in one of the centre panels, thus proving that the Bishop was responsible for its erection, and on the imperfect panel on the north side are the letters EDN CAN. These, no doubt, refer to Edmund Mainwaring, LL.D., who is styled by Sir Peter Leycester, "Chancellor of Chester in 1642," though his patent is not in the office. It shows that the seat was intended for the Chancellor, and that it was originally constructed for the position it now occupies. At the north-east corner of the enclosure is a perched-up seat resting on the top of the oak partition which surrounds the enclosure. Any person who sat in it would have to mount upon the seat which surrounds the table, and to use it as a resting-place for his feet. It does not look a very safe position. We are left to conjecture for whom this seat was intended. It may have been for the defendant (perhaps a notorious evil-doer) in ecclesiastical suits or for the witness who was to be examined. In either case the seat was an uncomfortable one, and the occupant would certainly be under close observation. As we look upon these fittings, black with the lapse of years, one is tempted to think how much they would be improved by careful and judicious cleaning. The seat referred to is evidently of the same date as the other fittings, but it is never occupied now, though the Court is used regularly, and the Chancellor or his deputy sits on days duly advertised to hear applications for faculties. It may be doubted whether there is any other Court in England which has a similar experience, and of which it can be said that the seating and arrangements are identical with what existed nearly 300 years ago. I have been told that there is one of the same kind at Lincoln: if that be so, the Chester Consistory Court cannot claim to be an absolutely unique example. The Consistory Court at Lichfield, which is under St. Chad's Chapel in the south aisle of the Choir, and is probably the oldest

part of the building, has in it some curious old Jacobean woodwork, but this is part of the stall work put up after 1661. The Court has been presided over for many years by the Worshipful Chancellor Espin, one of the two clerical Diocesan Chancellors at the present time. I am indebted to him for the following :—"I do not know of any other Court which has preserved its ancient character as ours has. I suspect that some, perhaps many, of the Consistory Courts in the older dioceses have been dismantled. Some years ago, when Bishop Hobhouse was Chancellor of the Diocese of Lichfield, I went to stay with him. He told me that he had been touring about the West of England, and among other places had lionised Gloucester Cathedral. Having been taken round by the verger, he asked next to see the Consistory Court. The verger had never heard of it, and said there was no such place there. Hobhouse insisted, and after some altercation an old verger was sent for who had retired on a pension, and was mouldering away somewhere hard by. He did remember, but said the Court had never been used for many years, in fact, not since 1856. When Hobhouse was taken to the place, he found that all the fittings had been cleared away, and it was made a receptacle for coals and lumber. Alas for the judicature of England! I believe the ancient 'Alma Curia de Arcubus' (Court of Arches) is now a cheesemonger's warehouse." The Court still retains some relics of its old procedure. The official who opens and adjourns the Court, and who cites all objectors to an application to appear, always begins with the formula, "Oyez, Oyez!" carefully pronounced as "Oh yes, Oh yes!"

It has been stated above that the Court is under Episcopal control, and so is not generally seen by visitors to the Cathedral. Any one, however, who is desirous of seeing this "Memorial of Old Cheshire" can do so by applying to the verger in attendance, and will be repaid by his visit, as it is extremely doubtful whether anywhere in England such a venerable specimen of the accessories of

a legal court of olden days can be found. The visitor, if gifted with a lively imagination, may people the Court with persons of a former generation, and call up in fancy some keenly-contested suit in connection with Ecclesiastical discipline, or some matrimonial or probate cause. If it should happen that the Court is sitting, he may see the Chancellor hearing applications for faculties, and may possibly note the opposition which is sometimes raised; but he will not be likely to witness such a scene of excitement as recently marked the Consistory Court of a southern diocese. He must be content with hearing the judge give his decision, it may be after a few explanatory remarks, in the words: "The Faculty is decreed in terms of the Citation."

HALTON COURT LEET

By V. B. Davies

THERE is an interesting little village called Halton on the northerly border of Cheshire, about two and a half miles from Runcorn; but as it is not on the high road to anywhere in particular, it is little known and seldom visited by strangers. It is interesting because of the ruins of an old castle which are there. This castle is situated on a high hill commanding an extensive view over a large part of Cheshire and across the river Mersey (which is of considerable width at this point) into Lancashire. Halton Castle is of very ancient date. It was built by Hugh Lupus, first Earl of Chester, soon after the Norman Conquest, and the manor and fee of Halton descended to Henry the Fourth, since when it has been annexed to the Crown, except during the time of the Protectorate of Cromwell, when it was put up for sale by auction and purchased by Henry Brooke of Halton, a predecessor of the present Sir Richard Brooke. On the restoration of the monarchy it reverted back to the Crown, and at this day it belongs to the King, who, as the Duke of Lancaster, is Lord of the Manor.

In former days the stewards of this manor were officials of considerable importance, and one of the early stewards was John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The late Mr. William Beamont and Mr. Robert Davies of Warrington were stewards in more recent years. On the death of the latter gentleman in 1902, Mr. Bolden, one of the officials in the Duke of Lancaster's office in London, was

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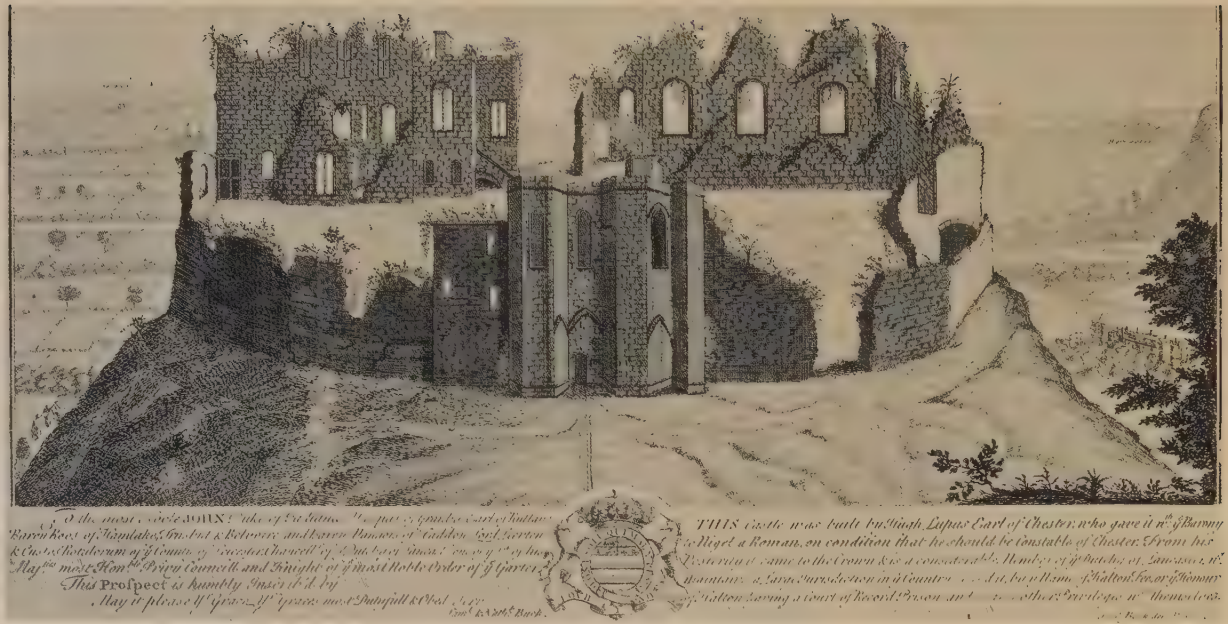

HALTON CASTLE.

appointed steward, and Mr. Vere Beamont Davies and Mr. Herbert Hatton of Warrington were appointed deputy stewards, and this arrangement holds good at the present time. In connection with this manor there is a court of very ancient origin, termed the Halton Court Leet, held at the castle, and over which the deputy steward presides. The earliest records of the court are dated 1347, in the time of Edward III.; but it is believed the court goes back for a period of about 660 years. The court formerly had a very extensive jurisdiction and a variety of duties to perform, but at the present time it has been superseded by the county courts and magistrates' courts, and its powers have passed away.

The court rolls were formerly kept in a large chest at Halton Castle, but have now been removed to London. The late Mr. William Beamont gives a very interesting account of these rolls in his book, *An Account of the Rolls of the Honour of Halton*, and sets out numerous extracts detailing the work performed by the Court Leet in former days. The following are some of them, and will, we think, be of interest to our readers :—

In 5 Ed. IV. the inquest at the court make this short return, "Nil presentant propter breve tempus."

At the Halton Court held in 4 Hen. VIII., 1512, Elizabeth Heath, servant to John Blinsten, and Agnes, wife of John Owen, were found to be common carriers away of the poles of the park, and were fined for it; and Agnes was further charged with stealing the racks placed in the park to hold the hay which had been placed there for the King's deer (*feris*).

In 1544 the jury at Thelwall presented Robert Bold and Thomas Heypey for keeping cards "talos [dice] et alia joca illicita," in their houses, "contra firmam statuti."

In 1559 a tenant was presented at the court for not ringing his swine.

In 1608 John Lawton was fined 3s. 4d. for allowing Thomas Whiteley to remain tippling in his house, which it is presumed was public, for one hour.

In 1655 a man was fined for suffering his wife to fight and draw blood.

On Thursday before St. George's Day, 4 Hen. VIII., 1512, William Hicson was excused attending at the Manor Court because he was going with the King on his wars in France. This man probably went with the Marquis of Dorset's unfortunate expedition, with which, however, the King did not go.

In the 42 Edward III., 1370, Hamon de Warburton is fined by the court for taking a hare in the lord's warren at Whitley. The warren here spoken of must mean the lord's free warren, for hares are not, like rabbits, confined in an enclosed warren.

In 1507 the jury at the Halton Court held at Thelwall presented John Bollyng of Warrington, yeoman, for that he on 1 February, and on divers other days as well before as after at Appleton and elsewhere within the fee of Halton with greyhounds and other dogs (cum greybitches venaticis et aliis canibus) was a common hunter "vi et armis," not having lands and tenements to the value of xls. a year, and, it is added, "nil habet ideo capiatur."

In 1512, at the Runcorn halmote, the jury, as we have before mentioned, presented William Runcorn of Runcorn, chaplain, for that he not being beneficed to xls. a year did keep a hare hound and was a common hunter.

In 1380 one William Harper, who had been tried at Chester and found guilty of the murder of Adam Mushet, was brought back to Halton and there hanged by the bailiff, and the lord of the fee received six pence for the value of his goods.

In 1450 six or more persons were charged with

feloniously entering and breaking into a dwelling-house at Halton and stealing thereout money and goods.

In 1474 there is a notice of a more serious charge. Two Welshmen from Mold having committed a burglary at Keckwick, and stolen thereout, among other articles, a sheaf of arrows, and having been committed for it, broke out of the castle, taking with them their fetters and chains, which must have helped to discover them, for they were soon afterwards retaken and tried before Thomas, Lord Stanley, the seneschal, and, being found guilty, were hanged at Halton.

At the Widnes Court in 4 Hen. VIII., 1512, Robert Woodfall was charged with walking at night through the King Street in Farnworth in front of the houses of the King's tenants, and with force and arms, namely, a staff and a dagger, calling out "Whoever wishes to fight me, let him come out," whereby the King's subjects were disturbed and put in fear; wherefore he was fined by the court.

In the same year three persons were presented for *lucrum excessivum*, by which it is supposed usury was meant; though in 1375 some butchers were presented *quia ceperunt lucrum excessivum*, meaning that they had charged too much. In 1512 some men were presented for using bows and arrows to drive a man off some land where he was digging turf.

In 1544 one George Amery of Barnton was presented for that he did keep and harbour crows in his grounds and did permit them to build in his woods, to the injury of the country and contrary to the statute in such case made and provided.

On October 3, 1561, Helena Ditchfield was charged with a trespass in pulling down her neighbours' fences.

In 1593, a grievous murder having been committed at Grappenhall Heath on the person of John Findley, a hawker of Scottish cloth, the crime was brought home to one William Geston, a servant of the Bishop of Chester. The

jury at Halton presented the fact, and the prisoner, having been tried for it and convicted at Chester Assizes, was hanged in chains on April 27, 1593, near the spot where the murder was committed.

In 1608 one Stockton was presented for selling ale without the justices' licence, and taking in and entertaining irregular and pernicious persons to the disturbance of his neighbours, and one Lawton for permitting a man to tipple in his house for one hour was fined 3s. 4d., and Charles Hall for taking in inmates was fined 6s. 8d.

On January 16, 1660, Roger Drakeford, who had conveyed a prisoner to Sir Peter Leycester's (the great Cheshire antiquary), a journey of fourteen miles, was paid 3s. 6d. for himself and his horse, a small sum for so long a journey.

In 1388 the Prior of Norton was charged with making two fish-yards in the Mersey, one called Gracedieu and the other Charity, which obstructed the passage of the lord's boat of eight oars from Fresh Pool to Thelwall.

In 1598 the jury found that Robert Dutton of Preston did fish in Thomas Dutton's pit and did take his fish in the daytime without leave or licence from him, and therefore they did amerce him.

In 1605 the court complained of the number of the fish-yards at Thelwall and of the encroachments they made on the river.

On October 8, 1655, the old complaint of the river being obstructed by fish-yards was again renewed.

In 1655 a number of persons were presented and fined for keeping up their weirs and fish-yards in the mid-stream of the Mersey so that the Lord of the fee could not pass by the "key" of Thelwall with boats and barges.

It will thus be seen that the Court in former days had a wide and extensive jurisdiction and dealt with a variety of matters. Nowadays, as before stated, the court has no powers, but the court is held by the deputy steward at

the Castle, or rather at the Castle Hotel adjoining the ruins, once every three years, simply to keep up the old custom, and for the sake of past memories. A jury summons signed by the Bailiff of the Court in the following form :—

Manor and Fee of Halton, in the County of CHESTER, TO WIT. } BY VIRTUE of a PRECEPT to me directed, I HEREBY REQUIRE you personally to be and appear at a COURT LEET and VIEW of FRANK PLEDGE and COURT BARON to be held at Halton Castle, according to the custom there time immemorial used and approved, on Saturday, the day of at the hour of to be upon the Jury there.

Herein fail not at your peril.

Witness my hand at Halton aforesaid, this day of 19

BAILIFF OF THE SAID COURT.

is sent to the Overseers of the following townships :—

Aston juxta Budworth, Aston juxta Sutton, Appleton, Antrobus, Astmore, Barnton, Bartington, Bexton, Budworth (Great), Comberbach, Cotton, Church Hulme (Holmes Chapel), Cogshall, Crowley, Daresbury, Halton, Hatton, Kekewick, Lymm, Millington, Newton juxta Daresbury, Preston o'th Hill, Sutton, Stretton, Seven Oaks, Toft, Tabley (Over), Weston, Walton Superior, Walton Inferior, Whitley Superior, Whitley Inferior.

A jury is appointed, and sworn in by the deputy steward, and a constable and two burleymen are appointed.

The following is the form of oath administered to the foreman and rest of the jury :—

"You as foreman of this inquest, with the rest of your fellows, shall duly inquire and true presentment make of all such matters and things as relate to the present service, wherein you shall spare no man for fear, love, favour, or affection, nor present any man out of malice or hatred, but according as things here presentable shall come to your knowledge, by information or otherwise, so shall you make thereof true presentment without concealment. So help you God."

Before the opening of the court by the deputy steward, the bailiff makes the following proclamation :—

"Oyez ! Oyez ! Oyez ! All manner of persons who owe suit and service to this Court Leet and view of Frankpledge and Court Baron of His Most

Gracious Majesty the King, as Duke of Lancaster, Baron of Halton, and paramount Lord of this Manor and Fee, draw near, give your attendance, and answer to your names."

No business is, of course, transacted, and the proceedings finish up with a dinner, over which the deputy steward presides.

As before stated, the court must have had jurisdiction over a wide area, as the jurors are summoned from Barnton, near Northwich, and from Toft and Tabley, near Knutsford, and also from Holmes Chapel. It is also evident from the extracts from Mr. Beamont's book that minor courts were held in connection with the Halton Court at a variety of places, and it is also to be noticed that the jurisdiction of the court extended across the river Mersey into Lancashire, and that courts were held at Widnes and Farnworth. In fact, there is the Manor of Widnes, comprising land on the Lancashire side of the river, which also belongs to the Duchy of Lancaster, and of which the King is the lord, and it is presumed the jurisdiction of the court would extend over the area of this manor.

In some remarks on the last Court Leet, held in December 1908, the *Warrington Guardian* stated:

"That the Widnes or Farnworth Leet, which was subject to Halton, had the power to mete out only four punishments. These included the pillory, an ignominious punishment; and the cuck-stool or ducking-chair, for punishing a scold, of whose unruly member it was said:

'Of members the tongue is the worst and the best,
And an ill tongue sows often the seeds of unrest.'

To curb the tongue, they had also the brank, an iron bridle which kept the tongue quiet by more mechanical means. The court had also the stocks, the constable's prison as it was called, and the whipping-post, but the Farnworth or Widnes Leet, though allied to Halton, had not the power which Halton certainly possessed of inflicting the punishment of death."

In addition to its powers of punishment, there is no doubt that, prior to the days of printing and when only few people could read or write, the court was used as a means of making public proclamations, and that presentments

were made to it of matters of general interest to the people which otherwise could not have been brought to their knowledge. To-day we have our telegraphs and telephones, our newspapers and our books, and all other ways of letting every one know everything. Who shall say which were the happier days?

> "Let the great world spin for ever
> Down the ringing grooves of change."

In conclusion, we may remark that there is another relic of old times in connection with the Manor of Halton, in that part of the land there, and also in the Manor of Widnes before referred to, is still of copyhold tenure, and the ordinary laws of conveyancing do not apply to it. For instance, a conveyance of land is carried out by way of what is called a Surrender and Admission and a mortgage by a Conditional Surrender, and the deeds have to be signed by the parties before the deputy steward. These deeds are all entered on the court rolls of the manor, the originals being sent to the Duchy Office in London, and copies are kept at the office of the deputy steward, and other copies handed to the parties dealing with the property.

This mode of transfer of the land is cumbersome and expensive, and is gradually dying out, for any copyholder can apply to the Duchy of Lancaster to have his land enfranchised, and on the payment of certain fees he obtains a conveyance of same from the King, as Lord of the Manor, and the property then becomes his absolute freehold, and is dealt with afterwards like any other property. The seal of the Duchy of Lancaster is always affixed to the enfranchisement deeds, and is so large that it has to be attached to the deed by a strip of parchment and kept in a tin box.

CHESHIRE WORTHIES

By P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.

CHESHIRE, the "seed-plot of gentility," as Speed loved to call his native shire, can boast of many illustrious sons who have conferred honour on their county. A large volume would be needed wherein to chronicle all their achievements, their deeds of prowess, their successes as poets, divines, lawyers, and philosophers. We can only record the names of the most illustrious Cestrians who have achieved fame in various professions and are worthy of a niche in these memorials of the county.

Soldiers

Cheshire men have always been good fighters. They have played their part bravely on many a battlefield at home and abroad, and honour shall first be done to the soldiers of the shire. In civil war there was little unity amongst the gentlemen of Cheshire. They fought with, or against, each other as party faction or inclination dictated; but against the enemies of England they were formidable foes. The great Civil War that raged between King and Parliament brought most of these Cheshire soldiers into prominence, and most of the names on our list of warriors are connected with that period.

In the wars with France when the third King Edward reigned, Cheshire men showed well the stuff they were made of, their valour and bravery in arms. Foremost amongst their number in this group of early warriors stands Sir Thomas Danyers, who fought gallantly in the battle of Crecy under

the banner of the Black Prince. He plunged into the thickest of the fight, and when the King bade his son "win his spurs and the honour of the day for himself," Sir Thomas "relieved the banner of his Earl and took prisoner the Chamberlain of France, de Tankerville." For this gallant feat of arms the Prince rewarded the Cheshire knight with a goodly sum of money, and the promise of the grant of an estate in his native county. This promise was not fulfilled until after the warrior's death, when the fair lands of Lyme were bestowed upon his daughter, who had married Sir Piers Legh; and thus the famous family of the Leighs of Lyme began their existence, and happily the connection still survives after the lapse of many centuries.

Another brave soldier of the period was Sir John Delves, who with his companions in arms contributed greatly to the glorious victory of Poictiers. That fight was memorable for Cheshire men. The gallant James, Lord Audley, a native of the shire, though he lived in Staffordshire, had for his four squires, John Delves, Dutton of Dutton, Foulshurst of Crewe, and Hawkeston of Wrine Hall, a Cheshire man though residing in Staffordshire. When the battle day dawned Audley vowed to be foremost in the field and lead the attack, and "with the ayde of his four scuyers dyd marvels in arms, and foughte always in the cheyfe of the batyle; y^{t} day he never toke prisoner, but always foughte and wente on his enemyes." He was sorely wounded, and was borne from the field by his faithful squires. For his bravery the Prince made him a grant of five hundred marks a year for ever. This reward the good knight handed over to his squires, saying that they had deserved it as much as he, and had more need of it. So the Prince gave him a second grant of a like amount. Audley, as a further reward to his squires, ordered that they should bear on their coats of arms his own proper achievement, gules a fret, d'or. Sir John Delves purchased Doddington, near Nantwich, where he erected a goodly mansion in 1364, and where the statues of himself and his brave companions, carved in later

times, could be seen. There is an alabaster effigy of Sir Robert Foulshurst, one of the gallant squires, in Barthomley Church.

Sir Hugh Calveley sleeps at Bunbury, a mighty hero of the French wars who fought under the brave leader Sir John Chandos. You can see his fine alabaster tomb, a lion couching at his feet, and his crest, a calf's head, which he bore on many a foreign battlefield. Fuller says of him: "Tradition makes him a man of teeth and hands, who would feed as much as two, and fight as much as ten men; his quick and strong appetite could digest anything but an injury, so that the killingta man is reported the cause of his quitting this country, making hence for London and France. Here he became a most eminent soldier." It were vain to tell of all his exploits. He fought in Brittany in 1357, at Auray in 1364, Navarete in 1367, in Brittany again with Sir John Arundell in 1380, when the expedition was almost entirely destroyed by a storm and 20,000 men perished. Many of these warriors lived a wild and turbulent life during the wars, and Sir Hugh, perhaps repenting of his deeds, in his old age converted the Parish Church of Bunbury into a collegiate church, with a master and six chaplains to pray for his soul. One of his companions in arms was Sir Robert Knowles, born of mean parentage in Cheshire, but brave and valiant. He fought with Sir Hugh Calveley in Brittany in 1351, when thirty Englishmen encountered the like number of Bretons and were sorely worsted. The ruined castles that he left behind him in France were termed "Knowles's Mitres." His last service to his country was the suppression of Wat Tyler's rebellion.

The Wars of the Roses claimed some Cheshire victims. On the bloody field of Blore Heath, when the Earl of Salisbury defeated Lord Audley and the Yorkists on September 25, 1459, fell Sir Robert Booth, the ancestor of the Booth family of Dunham Massey. His brass memorial, with that of his wife, the heiress of that estate, is in the church at Wilmslow. Sir William Stanley, second son of the first Lord

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Sir Hugh Calveley's Tomb, Bunbury Church.

Stanley, in the time of Henry VII. held Ridley, being Chamberlain of Cheshire. He distinguished himself at the battle of Bosworth, rescuing Henry from great peril and saving his life. He was the first to set the crown of England on King Henry's head, after it had been found on the battlefield trampled under the feet of the fighters. A gratified monarch bestowed upon him wealth and honour, but he was accused of favouring the design of Perkin Warbeck, and perished on the scaffold. His manor of Ridley was forfeited to the Crown and given to another distinguished soldier, Sir Ralph Egerton, who fought bravely at the battle of the Spurs, and at the siege of Terouenne and Tournay, capturing the standard of the French. He also fought at Flodden Field, and was appointed royal standard-bearer of England, a high distinction nobly earned. He lies in the church at Bunbury, and from him descended the lines of the Earls and Dukes of Bridgewater.

Of the brave men of Elizabethan times we may mention the Cheshire warrior Sir Uryan Legh, of the Leghs of Adlington, who, present at the taking of Cadiz under the leadership of the Earl of Essex in 1590, was knighted for his gallantry, and in the time of James I. became Sheriff of Cheshire. You can see his portrait at Bramhall Hall attired in Spanish dress, in which, according to an old ballad, he wrought mischief in the heart of a fair Spanish lady who made violent love to him, and could only be deterred by the somewhat lately imparted knowledge that Sir Uryan had already a wife. Sir George Beeston, another gallant soldier, lies at Bunbury, where a fine monument records his memory. He was one of those who, though advanced in years, took an active part in defeating the Spanish Armada, and fought valiantly at the siege of Boulogne.

Fiercely did the great Civil War rage in Cheshire, and fiercely did the Cestrians fight. Foremost among them was Sir William Brereton, the great Cheshire leader of the Parliamentary army, and commander-in-chief of the Cheshire forces. The story of his fights is the history of the Civil

War in this and the neighbouring counties, and cannot be told here. His relative Lord Brereton, the owner of the seat Brereton, one of the finest mansions in the county, was a brave supporter of the Royalist cause. Sir William lived to see the Restoration, and died at the archiepiscopal palace at Croydon, which had been granted to him by the Parliament. Lord Brereton returned to his goodly house, but families, alas! become extinct, and the name once so famous in Cheshire history now no longer exists save in memory.

Colonel Edward Massey, of the ancient family of the Masseys of Coddington, was a soldier of fortune who fought on both sides in the war. He, however, threw in his lot with the enemies of the King, and was made Governor of Gloucester. He held the city during the siege; but on the triumph of the Independents his career was chequered, and he found his way back to the King, and became Major-general in the Royal army. History tells not when he died.

Another Parliamentary leader was Colonel Robert Dukinfield, of Dukinfield, who came of an ancient Cheshire family. He defended Stockport Bridge against Prince Rupert, laid siege to and captured Whiltenshaw, became Governor of Chester, took part in the disgraceful court-martial of the Earl of Derby, who was judicially murdered at Bolton, and obtained the surrender by the Countess of the Derby estates in the Isle of Man. He wrote a delightful letter to Cromwell, in which he tells the Protector that he firmly believes that the root of the tree of piety is alive in him, though the leaves thereof, through the abundance of temptations and flatterers, seemed to the writer to be withered much of late, yet he hoped time and experience would have a good influence upon his lordship, *Deo juvante*. This letter, and other outspoken words, did not endear Dukinfield to the Protector's followers, who showed their distrust of him. However, he crushed the abortive rising of Sir George Booth, and received the thanks of the Parliament and a reward for his services. He did not escape persecution

at the Restoration, but the Royalists admired the staunch old Colonel, and the King made his son a baronet.

This Sir George Booth, who before the return of Charles II. was appointed commander-in-chief of the King's forces in Cheshire, Lancashire, and North Wales, and headed an abortive attempt to restore his Majesty to the throne, was well rewarded for his services. After his defeat he escaped in a woman's habit, riding on a pillion behind one of his grooms. But his sex was detected by the landlord of an inn where he sojourned, and he was captured and sent to the Tower. In 1660 the House of Commons voted him £10,000 for his services in effecting the Restoration. He was created Baron Delamere of Dunham Massey, and was appointed Custos Rotulorum for the county. He died at Dunham Massey, and was buried at Bowdon in 1673. In his attempt to regain the throne for Charles II. he was greatly assisted by Roger Grosvenor, ancestor of the Dukes of Westminster, who have always "stood by their pious principles of faith and loyalty," as Randle Holme truly testifies. His son, Sir Thomas, commanded a troop in the Earl of Shrewsbury's regiment of horse in 1685, which encamped at Hounslow Heath, and he was offered a peerage by James II. for his answer to the repeal of the Test Acts, a bribe which he had the courage to resist. He was M.P. for Chester, Mayor of the city, and Sheriff of the county.

The Astons were unfortunate Royalists. Sir Thomas was defeated by Sir William Brereton at Middlewich, and Sir Arthur, after being Governor of Reading, and earning the praise of his sovereign, who deemed that "there was not a man in his army of greater reputation, or one of whom the enemy had greater dread," lost his leg and then his life in the slaughter of the garrison of Tredagh, in Ireland. Two other gallant Royalists must be mentioned, Sir Francis Gamul, of Buerton, who watched from the Phœnix Tower with the King the fatal fight of Rowton Heath, and helped him to escape from his enemies; and

Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, who performed many deeds of daring during the war; and at Rowton Heath, in order to convey a message to the King, crossed the Dee in a tub, holding the bridle of his horse, which was swimming at the side. He was a good friend and servant of the King, Governor of the Castle of Chester, and lies beneath his fine monument at Nether Peover Church.

Henry Booth, Earl of Warrington and Baron Delamere, second son of Baron Delamere before mentioned, played as distinguished a part in the Revolution and in establishing William III. on the English throne as his father had done for Charles II. A brave assertor of his country's rights, and a defender of the Protestant religion, he fell foul of James II., and was tried on a groundless charge of high treason, the notorious Jefferies being his accuser. He escaped that peril, and soon raised an army in Cheshire and Lancashire to aid Dutch William. To him fell the duty of telling the last Stuart king that he must leave Whitehall, treating the fallen monarch with a respect and deference that touched his Majesty. Many honours were heaped upon him, including the Earldom of Warrington and a pension of £2000 a year; but he did not long enjoy his dignity, as death summoned him at the early age of forty-two years in 1693–4.

Colonel, and afterwards General, Werden risked his life and fortune for King Charles, had to fly from the country, and continued with the royal family until the Restoration, after which he was appointed to several offices of trust, and was comptroller of the royal household. His son John was created a baronet, and held many important posts.

Sir Roger Mostyn, of Mostyn, Baronet, was a gallant soldier who raised 1500 men for the King's service, captured Hawarden Castle, was Governor of Flint Castle, which he maintained until the death of the King's cause. His house of Mostyn was plundered, and he was imprisoned in Conway Castle; at the Restoration a baronetcy was the reward of his services.

Doubtless Cheshire had many other brave soldiers, but this list must now suffice.

BISHOPS

The county has seen many of her sons raised to the Episcopal Bench. Foremost amongst these was the saintly Bishop Wilson of Mona's Isle, who was born of humble parents in the parish of Burton in the Wirral district. Three years after the Restoration Thomas Wilson first saw the light; his holy, wise, charitable, God-fearing life was a burning and a shining light in his age, and his influence spread far and wide. He planted the Church anew in his remote little diocese. In vain did Queen Anne and Queen Caroline try to tempt him to leave the island by the offer of another diocese. He set his face against pluralism, the curse of his time, refusing to hold any preferments in addition to his See, which was poor and impoverished. Crowds flocked to see him, to crave from him a blessing. The writer has been with the fishermen of this island, and heard them sing their sweet hymns as they kneel beside their bulwarks when they are going to ply their calling on the sea, and he was told that Bishop Wilson first taught their fathers to sing those hymns and seek a blessing on their toil.

We know little of Dr. Hugh Bellot, Bishop of Bangor and Chester. He was the son of Thomas Bellot, of Great Moulton Hall, in the parish of Astbury in this county, and died in 1596. Nor can I say much of Bishop Rider, who was born in 1562 at Carrington in this county. He became Bishop of Killaloe in 1612, and found time amid his episcopal duties to compile a Latin Dictionary, But every one has heard of the famous Bishop Heber, who was born at Malpas in 1783, the son of the rector of that place. His poems and hymns are known to all. It was his Newdigate Prize Poem at Oxford on the subject of Palestine that first brought him fame. For some years he was rector of Hodnet, where he delighted in the calmness of village life.

At length he received a call to the See of Calcutta, where he died at the early age of forty-three years.

Bishop Edward Stanley was the son of Sir J. T. Stanley of Alderley Park, and was born in 1779. He was rector of Alderley from 1805 to 1837, and proved himself a model clergyman, shining as a light in a dark age. He came to an entirely neglected parish, and by his example and precept transformed it into a totally different place. He was an early educationist, and took care that his children should be well taught. He put down drunkenness and prize-fighting, and was a close observer of nature—a northern White of Selborne. In 1837 he was called to the See of Norwich, which he held until his death in 1849—a very worthy Bishop.

A few learned divines we may mention. Dr. Samuel Clarke, a Puritan, minister of Shotwick, where he was a favourite preacher. He was a very voluminous writer, and died in 1682. Dr. John Hulse, the founder of the Hulsean Lectures at Cambridge, was born at Middlewich in 1708. When a child he was rescued by his grandfather from squalid circumstances, and obtained high university distinction at Cambridge. He became vicar of Goostrey until, on his father's death, he became possessed of the family estate of Elworth, near Sandbach. John Barron, D.D., canon of Salisbury, chaplain to Lord-Chancellor Egerton, and founder of a Hebrew lectureship at Brazenose College, Oxford, should be mentioned, who died in 1642. He is described by a contemporary biographer as "a bountiful housekeeper, of a cheerful spirit and a peaceful disposition." Many other names of learned bishops and divines will occur to the reader, and this list would include many of the bishops and deans of Chester, but few of them were natives of the county, and are therefore not included in these biographical notes.

POETS

Of poets, we have mentioned the saintly Heber. But there are others of an earlier age. John Brownswerd, a native of the shire, was born in 1540, and after graduating at Cambridge became master of the Grammar School at Macclesfield, earning fame as one of the best Latin poets of his age. A tablet was raised to the memory of this "vir pius & doctus," who is described as

> Alpha poetarum, coryphæus grammaticorum
> Flos pædagogum hic sepelitur humo.

He died in 1589, a good example of the learned men of the Elizabethan age, who trained their pupils in good classic lore. There were several such schools in Cheshire—at Chester, Audlem, Northwich, and other places. Another Elizabethan poet owed his education to such schools. Geoffrey Whitney, who was born at Nantwich, learned his classics at Audlem and Northwich, graduated at Oxford, and then migrated to Leyden. There he published his *Choice of Emblemes*, printed in 1586 in the famous printing-press of Christopher Plantyn, and a collection of fables. Each poem is dedicated to one of the principal gentlemen in Lancashire and Cheshire. The Cheshire historian Ormerod quotes a poem addressed "to my countremen of the Namptwicke in Cheshire," relating to a fire that had lately destroyed the town, and comparing the place to a phœnix, of which the poet gives a device. Near Northwich was born Sir John Birkenhead, poet and political writer, of humble origin, his father being either a saddler or an inn-keeper. The excellence of the Cheshire schools is again shown by his ability in taking a degree at Oxford and a fellowship at Oriel College. When the Civil War broke out he started the newspaper the *Mercurius Aulicus* for the purpose of "communicating the intelligence and affairs of the Court of Oxon to the rest of the kingdom." The King was pleased with this product of his fluent pen, and

appointed him Reader in Moral Philosophy. When misfortune befell him with the fall of the Royal cause, he wrote poems and divers political tracts, and at the Restoration was rewarded for his loyalty with a knighthood and other lucrative appointments. He has been described as a man "of great courage in words, scoffing humour, an unscrupulous conscience, and an inexhaustible fund of arch and mischievous drollery, . . . one of the most expert and successful guerilla partisans on the side of the Royalists."

The poet Milton is connected with this county, as his third wife, Elizabeth Mynshal, a lady connected with some of the best Cheshire families, came from Cheshire and died at Nantwich. She is believed to have been a termagant, and brought the poet little pleasure, but others have described her as of "a peaceful and agreeable humour."

The Rev. William Broome, a native of Cheshire, was a poet of some distinction, a translator of Homer, and the coadjutor of Pope in the translation of the *Odyssey*. He supplied all the notes to that work, but he quarrelled with Pope, and was lampooned in the *Dunciad*. Dr. Johnson gave him a niche in his *Lives of the Poets*, describing him as an excellent versifier; "his lines are smooth and sonorous, and his diction is select and elegant." Another name must be honoured among Cheshire poets, that of Henry Birkenhead, M.D., a poet of distinction, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, a founder in 1707 of the Professorship of Poetry in that University.

JUDGES AND CHANCELLORS

Some Cheshire lawyers have achieved fame. In the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth, at Nantwich in 1588 was born Randolph Crewe, who came of the distinguished family of the Crewes of Crewe Hall, though his father was in poor circumstances at the time of his birth. He and his brother Thomas were fired with the idea of regaining the family estates. The good schools of Cheshire enabled them to

go to Oxford; they became students at Lincoln's Inn, Serjeants-at-Law, and successively Speakers of the House of Commons. Randolph rose rapidly in his profession, and in 1624 became Lord Chief Justice of England. In the discharge of his high office he showed a perfectly honest and independent spirit, much learning and ability, strict honour and integrity, therein differing from many of the venal judges of his age. He refused to bow to the King's will in respect of the imposition of illegal taxes, and in consequence was deprived of his rank. He retired to his beloved Cheshire, purchased the old family estates, and built for himself a new manor house. Fuller tells in his quaint way that Sir Randolph "first brought the model of excellent building into these remote parts; yea, brought London into Cheshire, in the loftiness, sightliness, and pleasantness of their structures." His letter to the Duke of Buckingham is a model of straightforward honesty, stating his reasons for his decision in the matter of the taxation, and asking for his Grace's intercession with the King. While the war was raging between King and Parliament he quietly passed away in his Hall at Crewe, and lies at rest in the Crewe Chapel at Barthomley.

Another eminent lawyer was Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, Thomas, Viscount Brackley, the natural son of Sir Richard Egerton of Ridley, born in 1540. Queen Elizabeth on one occasion heard him pleading with his usual shrewdness against a Crown case, and exclaimed, "In my troth, he shall never plead against me again," and from that day his rise was rapid. He became Attorney-General in 1592, was knighted, Master of the Rolls in 1594, and two years later Lord Keeper and Member of Privy Council. On the death of the Queen he was called upon to conduct the affairs of the nation until the arrival of King James of Scotland, who constituted him Lord Chancellor and Baron Ellesmere. For twelve years he held the reins of office, conducted many important trials, helped to unite the kingdoms of England and Scotland, and at length, full of years and

honours, with much pathos resigned his high office, being succeeded by Sir Francis Bacon. His body rests in Dodleston Church.

The name of Sir Edward Fitton, Lord President of Connaught and Thomond, and Treasurer of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, must not be forgotten or omitted from our list of Cheshire worthies. He was born at Gawsworth, and a memorial to the knight may be seen in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

Sir Humphrey Davenport was Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in the reign of Charles I., and had a distinguished legal career. He was the fourth son of William Davenport of Bramhall, near Stockport. Sir Peter Warburton of Grafton, one of the Judges of the King's Bench about the same period, was also a Cheshire man. Another great lawyer was Richard Peter Arden, Lord Alvanley, born at Bredbury in 1745. In 1780 he became King's Counsel, M.P. for Newton in the Isle of Wight, Master of the Rolls, and, in 1801, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, when he was created Lord Alvanley, taking his title from a manor in the parish of Frodsham which had been held by his ancestors. He was a somewhat outspoken, hasty, and flippant judge, and amusing stories are told of his sayings in court and of his disputes with Lord Chancellor Thurlow.

Chief Justice Williams was the son of a rector of Bunbury, where he was born in 1777, and had a brilliant legal career. His reputation was made at the trial of Queen Caroline, whose junior counsel he was, with Mr. Brougham, afterwards Lord Brougham, as his senior. His able advocacy was the chief cause of the vindication of the unfortunate Queen. He was returned to Parliament for Lincoln in 1823, became Attorney-General in 1830, and Puisne Judge of the King's Bench four years later, when he was made a knight. A volume of Greek epigrams testifies to his devotion to classical studies.

The last Cheshire lawyer on our list is Lord Kenyon. Though not actually born in the county, his native place

being Greddington, just over the border in Flintshire, he had a Cheshire lady for his mother, and began his career at an attorney's office in Nantwich. He might have spent his life there, having been offered a partnership; but he soared higher, went to London, and was called to the Bar in 1756. He was M.P. for Hindon and Chief Justice of Chester in 1780, and was engaged in the defence of Lord George Gordon in that memorable trial of the Gordon rioters. After being Attorney-General and Master of the Rolls, he was created a baronet, raised to the peerage, and appointed Chief Justice in 1788. He was noted for his parsimonious ways, relics of his early poverty; but his biographers assert that few lawyers so able, and none more honest, ever entered Westminster Hall.

SCIENTISTS

Edward Brerewood, the son of a Chester tradesman, born in 1565, was a celebrated mathematician and antiquary. From the Free School at Chester he went to Oxford, and became the first professor of astronomy in Gresham College. Several of his works were published after his death by his nephew, Robert Brerewood, of Chester.

Cheshire can boast of an early botanist and herbalist, John Gerarde, who was born at Nantwich in 1545. He was head gardener to Lord Burghley from 1577. He took his early lessons in the book of nature when wandering on the banks of the Weaver in his native shire. He wrote, in 1596, his work, entitled *Catalogus arborum, fruticum ac plantarum*, and he was the author of *The Herball or General Historie of Plantes*, "gathered by John Gerarde, of London, Master in Chirurgerie."

A more eminent scientist was Samuel Molyneux, son of a learned father, and was born at Chester in 1689. He was a wonderful, precocious genius, and could do marvellous things when he was only five years old. His biographer

tells us that "when he advanced to manhood he was acknowledged to be one of the most polite and accomplished gentlemen in England or Ireland, and was appointed secretary to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George II., and had a house in Kew, near Richmond, where he improved himself in his favourite study astronomy." He greatly improved the making of telescopes. He married Elizabeth, sister to the Earl of Essex.

The third Lord Brereton, unlike his father, who loved warlike pursuits and fought for the King in the Civil War, was a lover of science and peaceful pursuits. He was educated at Breda in Holland, under the care of Dr. John Pell, and became a good mathematician and algebraist. He was one of the founders of the Royal Society, associated with all the learned men of his time, and always endeavoured to advance the cause of science. He was somewhat of a poet, musician, and composer. The proceedings of the Royal Society often record his name, which learned Society in its infant days seems to have concerned itself with somewhat childish questions, and exercised the minds of its members on the divining-rod and the superstition with regard to the portents presaging the death of any member of the Brereton family.

Lawrence Earnshaw was a wonderful mechanical genius, a native of Mottram-in-Longdendale in the first half of the eighteenth century. Nothing came amiss to his skilful fingers. He could shear sheep and make the wool into cloth entirely with implements of his own making. Engraver, painter, gilder, glass-stainer, blacksmith, gunsmith, bell-founder; maker of sundials, harpsichords, violins, organs—he could do everything. But his great achievement was in the art of clockmaking, producing a curious astronomical and geographical machine which represented the motions of the earth, moon, stars, &c. He anticipated the invention of the spinning-jenny, but destroyed his machine lest it should decrease labour and take bread from the mouths of the poor. Another noted clockmaker was John Whitehurst,

Fellow of the Royal Society, born at Congleton in 1713. He was author of some philosophical papers, amongst others of an *Inquiry into the Original State and Formation of the Earth.*

Another learned Cestrian was Dr. William Falconer, born at Chester in 1741. He was learned in science and horticulture, and published several works, including *An Historical View of the taste for Gardening and Laying-out Grounds among the Nations of Antiquity; An Essay on the Means of Preserving the Health of those employed in Agricultural Labours;* and *A Sketch of the History of Sugar in Early Times.*

HISTORIANS

Many are the writers on Cheshire history whose names should be recorded—men who have loved their county and desired to tell of its beauties and historical associations. We can only mention a tithe of those worthy sons who have done honour to their shire, and accomplished work which has been often little understood or appreciated by their fellows.

The first of these is a name honoured by all historians, Henry Bradshaw, a native of Chester and a monk of St. Werburgh's Abbey, who lived in the latter part of the fourteenth century. He was one of the earliest chroniclers of Cheshire, and wrote his works in the cloistered shade of his monastic house. His works consist of a treatise, *De Antiquitate et Magnificentiâ Urbis Cestriæ*, and a translation of "The Holy Lyfe and History of Saint Werburge, very frutefull for all Christen people to rede." The first work is believed to have been lost, unless it is incorporated in the latter treatise, as Dr. Gower suggested. Perhaps we should have included Henry Bradshaw amongst our poets, in whose company he well deserves a high and important niche. His body lies near the shrine of the saint of whose virtues he loved to sing.

John Booth of Twamlowe, a contemporary of Sir

William Brereton, was a distinguished Cheshire genealogist who occupies a foremost place amongst the antiquaries of the county. His works have been most useful to subsequent writers.

John Speed, born at Farndon in 1552, is a writer of whom any county may be proud. An account of this learned historian has already appeared in this volume.

The disputes of the learned often cause amusement, and the controversy between the rival baronets, Sir Peter Leicester and Sir Thomas Maynwaring of Over Peover, aroused much merriment in 1673–75. Sir Peter published a learned work in two volumes on the historical antiquities of Great Britain and more particularly of Cheshire, in which he asserted that Amicia, daughter of Hugh Keveliock, fifth Earl of Chester, a descendant of Hugh Lupus, was illegitimate. This aroused Sir Thomas Maynwaring, whose ancestor had married the said Amicia. He published a defence of the injured lady. Then Peter wrote an answer to Sir Thomas's book, who retaliated with another book. So the controversy went on, each disputant waxing more wroth, until at last a law-suit ensued, the result being in favour of the champion of Amicia.

One of the earliest historians of Cheshire was Daniel King, the author of *The Vale Royal of England, or History of Cheshire.* He was more skilled in engraving than in writing, and his work was adorned with plates by Hollar. He was greatly aided by William Smith, *Rouge Dragon*, William Webb, clerk of the Mayor's court at Chester, and William Aldersey, Mayor of Chester. Webb had some pretensions to be accounted a poet, and wrote "a Discourse on English poetry" in 1586. King's *Vale Royal* was not a great book, but it has served its purpose in preserving a record of many things which might have been forgotten, and its engravings and illustrations will always be valuable. An abridged and revised edition was subsequently published by Thomas Hughes.

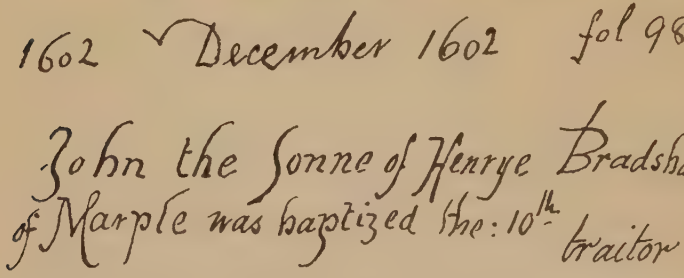
An account of the Randle Holmes—father, son, and

grandson—a noted family of antiquaries, appears in another chapter. Mr. T. Worthington Barlow, F.L.S., barrister of Gray's Inn, wrote much on the county; and we are greatly indebted to his *Historical and Literary Associations of Cheshire* for much valuable information which has been useful in the compiling of this record of Cheshire worthies. Nor must we forget the interesting diary of the Rev. Edward Burghall, the Puritanical vicar of Aston, who records with much perspicuity the events of the Civil War in Cheshire with many "moral reflections." His animadversions on the Quakers, who troubled him sorely, are rather amusing reading.

Amongst Cheshire worthies must not be forgotten Sir Richard Sutton, co-founder with Bishop William Smyth of Lincoln, of Brazenose College, Oxford, "for the study of Philosophy and Sacred Theology, to the Praise and Honour of Almighty God," in 1509. He was born at Prestbury, near Macclesfield, and was a lawyer, Governor of the Inner Temple, and Steward of the Monastery of Syon, afterward Sion College. He was the author of a work entitled *Orcharde of Syon*, but his chief fame rests on his completion of the foundation of the Oxford College which had been commenced by the bishop.

Such, then, are some of the worthies of Cheshire. Many others might be included, but the roll of honour of the county is already lengthy. We might mention the names of several of the illustrious families of the shire whose scions still continue to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers, and have conferred credit on their houses and on their native county. Some of the great and good men of Cheshire have but recently passed away, whose names are household words in the Cestrian land. They need no mention, no memorial, save that which their lives and good deeds have afforded. The love of the men of Cheshire for their shire has inspired many an act of daring, much toil, much devotion; may it continue so to do in the Vale Royal of England.

There is one name more that must be mentioned. He has been denounced as a "viper of hell," a "monster of men," whose bones were dragged from his tomb in Westminster Abbey and buried beneath the Tyburn gallows tree. Shall a regicide be mentioned among the worthies? Such was John Bradshaw, the judge of the Martyr King. He came of a good Cheshire family, and spent his life in studying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John the Sonne of Henrye Bradshawe of Marple was baptized the: 10th traitor

law, rising high in his profession. This is not the place to judge his motives. He was no time-server, nor was he a universal favourite with his political colleagues. It is enough for us to note that he was born in Cheshire. A facsimile of the register of his baptism is shown with the additional word "traitor" added by a later hand, marking the writer's detestation of the man who was called upon to play so prominent a part in the tragedy of the murder of a king, the chief instrument in the travesty of justice that ended on the scaffold at Whitehall.

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THE FOUR RANDLE HOLMES OF CHESTER

(An Epitome of a Paper by the Late J. P. Earwaker, F.S.A.)

By the Archdeacon of Chester

NO book dealing with memorials of old Cheshire would be complete which did not give due prominence to those noted antiquaries of former generations, the Randle Holmes, and acknowledge gratefully and without stint the indebtedness of subsequent writers and students to their research and patient investigations. What follows will show, however inadequately, how great these obligations are. At the outset it may be said that some confusion has arisen from the fact that the name Randle Holme was borne by four members of the family in successive generations, and as a consequence the work of one has sometimes been assigned to another.

The family of Holme is a distinctly Cheshire one, Robert de Holme acquiring by marriage at the end of the fourteenth century a moiety of the manor of Tranmere or Tranmole. The property remained in the family till the reign of James I., when William Holme of Chester, on whom it had devolved, sold it. His uncle Thomas was the first to settle in Chester, and his fourth son was the first Randle Holme. He was born about 1571, dying in 1655, in the eighty-fourth year of his age. By his marriage in 1598 with the widow of Thomas Chaloner of Chester, a distinguished antiquary and herald, he succeeded to her late husband's papers, and was thus probably led to take up the study of genealogy and family

history. Chaloner had held an official position as deputy to the Heralds' College, and in March 1600–1 he was succeeded by Randle Holme, who was appointed by William Segar, Norroy King-of-Arms, as his deputy, to keep a "regester booke of Funerals in the counties of Chester, Lancaster, and North Wales." In this capacity he had to truly enter the arms and crests, &c., "of all such persons of Coate Armor and worship as it shall please God to call out of this transitory life"; and to demand and collect the "due fees." In 1604 he is mentioned as an Alderman of his company, as also is his brother William, "a stationer," he himself being "a painter." In 1615 he was one of the two sheriffs of the city, and in 1622 rebuilt his house in Bridge Street, now the "Old King's Head." In 1631 he was one of those selected for "obligatory knighthood," but he compounded by payment of £10. In 1633 he was elected Mayor of the city, and at the same time his son Randle became one of the sheriffs. He was in Chester throughout the whole of the troublous time of the Civil War, and also during the violent outbreak of the plague in 1647. In January 1646 he was charged by the Parliamentarians as having taken the King's part, and was fined as a delinquent £160. This apparently he did not pay, for after his death his son protested against the payment of this large sum, and some interesting documents are in existence in which it was urged that he was looked upon as the Parliament's friend. He died in January 1654–55, and was buried at St. Mary's-on-the-Hill, the interesting memorial tablet on wood, bearing his arms, being unfortunately lost. He was succeeded by his son Randle, born in 1601, who in 1625 had married the eldest daughter of Matthew Ellis of Overleigh, whose widow became ten years later his father's second wife. In 1629 he was one of the churchwardens of St. Mary's, holding office for two years; and in 1643 he became Mayor, and as such was the recipient of numerous official letters from the chief commanders of the Royalist side. These and other similar documents were bound up by his son and successor the third Randle

Holme, and are preserved in the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum. They bear autograph signatures of King Charles I., Prince Rupert, Sir John Byron, Sir Francis Gamul, and many others, and form a most interesting collection. The same description applies to another volume, giving a full account of the siege of Chester, and which was written at the time and derived from papers of the Randle Holmes, the writer in one passage stating that he had "for the most part gathered this history from the study of Randle Holme"—that is, the second Randle Holme. This is a sufficient indication of the historical instinct and practice of the family, and of what we owe to it for the preservation of accurate records of events that happened. Randle Holme the Second did not long survive his father—only a little over four years. A handsome monument to his memory in the Church of St. Mary-on-the-Hill in Chester gives a pedigree of the family, tracing it back to "Peter de Lymme, son of Gilbert, Lord of Lymme, who lived in the time of Edward I." It also contains three coats of arms, besides crests, and is a good specimen of heraldic knowledge and genealogical research. This Randle Holme, though buried at St. Mary's, lived after his second marriage, in 1643, in the parish of Holy Trinity, where his name appears in the list as Mayor in 1644. During the siege of Chester the Stationers' Company could not hold their meetings in the "Golden Phœnix" (the Phœnix Tower), and so they met at "Alderman Holmes junior's house in Watergate Street." In the entry of a meeting "at the Alderman's howse" on October 18, 1645, we are told that "the Golden Phœnix was employed for service for the defence of the garrison of Chester, the enimie in close seidge about the Cittye." Whether Randle Holme the Second was able to secure the remission of the fine demanded of his father we cannot say. In the Harl. MSS. is a document in which he has left a record of his family, with the dates of their births and baptisms, and the names of their god-parents, designated in some of the entries as "witnesses" and in some as "gossips." We learn from

this that his first-born and eldest son, the third Randle Holme, was born on December 24, 1627, and baptized on the 30th of the same month, and that one of his godfathers was Francis Gamul, the other being his grandfather, the first Randle Holme.

Randle Holme the Third is the most distinguished of the four who successively bore that name. He was the author of a most extraordinary book, entitled *The Academy of Armoury;* and he was also a prominent Freemason. He took up the business of his father and grandfather, and in due course was admitted a member of the same company, of which, on the death of his father, he was duly elected an alderman. He served the office of churchwarden of St. Mary's for two years from Easter 1657, and was instrumental in the erection of a new tower or steeple and the provision of a new peal of four bells, the initials of the churchwardens (George Chamberlain and Randle Holme), as well as those of the bell founder, John Scott of Wigan, appearing on them. The peal has now been enlarged into one of eight. In 1664 he was appointed to the office of "sewer of the chamber in extraordinary to his Majesty King Charles II." A "sewer" was an officer whose function it was to place the dishes on the table and to remove them afterwards, and some think that it was also his duty to taste them. It almost looks as if the title had arisen from the mis-spelling of the word, and as if the "se*w*er" really was the "se*rv*er." However, the word is to be found in Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and others. In the Harl. MSS. we have the certificate of Randle Holme's appointment, which shows that under it he was exempt from "bearing any publick office whatsoever." This will account for the fact that, unlike his father and grandfather, he never held any office in the corporation of his native city. We do not know by what Court influence he obtained this appointment, which, though it contained certain privileges, must have been purely honorary, and we do not read of his being called upon on any occasion to fulfil its duties.

A dispute arose about this time between Randle Holme and the Heralds' College, whose powers he was charged with usurping, by preparing coats of arms and hatchments, and receiving fees for so doing. The controversy was sharp and took a very practical shape, for we learn from the diary of William Dugdale, Norroy King-of-Arms, that he pulled down or defaced some "Achievements which Holmes, the Paynter, of Chester had hung up." This he did at Budworth, Nether Peover, and Eastham, and other places in Cheshire. The dispute had nothing to do with his heraldic knowledge and skill, which cannot have been disputed, but probably arose from the fact that he had not then (as he subsequently was) been officially appointed deputy to the Norroy King-of-Arms. It would have been a dangerous precedent to allow any unauthorised person, however competent, to undertake such functions, and might have led to much confusion and to many mistakes, so that the action of the Norroy King-of-Arms is easily accounted for. The difficulty, which lasted some five years or thereabouts, was apparently solved by the appointment of Randle Holme as deputy to the Norroy King-of-Arms (as his father had been before him), though there is no record of the date of his appointment. He had probably acted for his father, and continued the same practice after his father's death without waiting for the requisite authority.

It was in 1688 that he issued his extraordinary book—*The Academy of Armory, or a Storehouse of Armory and Blazon*. From the title it might be supposed that the work was entirely on heraldic matters, whereas it treats of almost every subject under the sun, and is a kind of encyclopædia, arranged, it must be confessed, in a most awkward form. He began collecting materials for it at a very early age, when he was only twenty-two; and it was forty years later before the book was printed. Whilst there can be no doubt that much of what it contains might well have been omitted, it stands out as a monumental evidence of the industry of the author as a collector of out-of-the-way information

which he was anxious to preserve, and of his desire to make the work as complete as possible. The information thus gathered together is sometimes very valuable, and often very quaint; whilst specimens of Cheshire dialect, now obsolete, are to be found in words and phrases which were evidently in common use when the book was written. The title-page, which is very long, prepares us for the variety which the book contains, as the following sentence from it will show: "Very useful for all gentlemen, scholars, Divines, and all such as desire any knowledge in arts and sciences."

The chapters are dedicated to various personages or classes of persons, and some of these lengthy dedications are interesting compositions. The Fourth Book was never set up in type, and of the latter portion of the Third Book the only printed example is in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. Other copies end with the first part of Book III., concluding with a valedictory address, explaining how the vast expense entailed and the inadequate return made him "resolve to go no further." The book was printed at Chester, and is the earliest work printed there, and as such has, of course, a special interest for the city and county. It is rather remarkable that on the site of his house in Bridge Street (engraved by Cuitt as *Lamb Row*, the house having subsequently been converted into a hostelry, "The Lamb") now stand the printing works of Mr. Griffiths. In his will his son Randle referred to a "Room in his dwelling in the Bridge Street formerly made use of as a Printing House or place." Dr. Ormerod describes the book as "the strangest jumble on natural history, mineralogy, and surgery, occasionally diversified by palmistry, hunters' terms, the cockpit laws, an essay on Time, and on Men punished in Hell." The description is not inaccurate, yet there can be no doubt that in its eleven hundred folio pages are to be found many valuable pieces of information, and that in this respect they form "a storehouse" not only of "Armory and

Old Lamb Row.

Blazon," but also of many other subjects, so that the student who has the patience to explore them is sure to learn something. They show, too, what an inquiring mind the author must have had, and how he noted down and kept ready for use the knowledge he obtained.

Randal Holme the Third was also a distinguished Freemason, and probably one of the earliest connected with Chester. He alludes to the fact that he was a "Member of the Society called Free-Masons" in his *Academy of Armory*, and one of his manuscript volumes is entitled *Constitutions of Masonry*, giving certain particulars as to the names of persons made Freemasons, and to the initiation fees paid by them. Evidently there was a lodge of Freemasons at Chester in the seventeenth century, of which Randle Holme (III.) was a member. It has been supposed by some that his father also may have been a Mason, as there are some masonic emblems on the monument put up to his memory in St. Mary's Church. The Freemasons of the county showed their respect for his memory, and commemorated his connection with the church by rebuilding the north porch in 1892, whilst Mr. Henry Taylor, F.S.A., placed stained-glass windows of a heraldic nature in the same, with a full account of him. The laying of the foundation-stone of this porch by the then Provincial Grand Master, Earl Egerton of Tatton, with full masonic rites, was an interesting ceremony, and was attended by some two hundred Masons in their regalia.

It has been already noted that Randle Holme III. lived in Bridge Street. This house he apparently built about 1670, and did this without consulting the Corporation, and he was ordered to pull it down, and fined for persisting in building it. The house, however, was not demolished until early in the nineteenth century, when the Grosvenor Bridge was built over the Dee, and it was subsequently converted into a tavern called "The Lamb."

Randle Holme III. died on March 12, 1699–1700, in the seventy-third year of his age. He was thrice married,

and had issue eight sons and six daughters. Of the former only three survived him—Randle, by his first wife, born in 1659, and George and John by his second. Randle was taken into partnership by his father when he was thirty-one years of age—that is, in 1690. In 1691 he became a member of the Stationers' Company, of which he was elected an alderman in 1705, the same year in which he was one of the two sheriffs of the city. Like his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, he also served the office of churchwarden of St. Mary's, and like them, too, he was deputy to Norroy King-of-Arms. He continued the work of his ancestors, and the churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary's contain various entries of payments to him for work done. He died August 30, 1707, aged 48, all his five children having predeceased him. In his will, referred to above, he bequeaths all his books and collections of heraldry to his half-brothers George and John, to be equally divided between them. These books and collections no doubt represented the work and labours of all four Randle Holmes, as well as what the first of that name obtained by his marriage with the widow of Thomas Chaloner. They represented the researches of over a hundred years, and contained abstracts of many documents which no longer exist, and accounts of visits paid to many churches, with accurate descriptions of the monumental inscriptions, and the old heraldic stained glass in the windows. Early in the eighteenth century they were purchased by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, having been, it is said, first offered to the Corporation of Chester, who declined to buy them. They now form a portion of that magnificent collection of manuscripts in the British Museum known as "the Harleian MSS.," and run to about 270 volumes. Naturally their contents are extremely diversified, and they vary considerably in value; but there can be no doubt that to any one inquiring into the history of Chester, Cheshire, Lancashire, and North Wales they contain a mine of information, and are simply invaluable. Unfortunately there

is no complete and sufficient index of their contents, so that laborious perusal of them is necessary, for the acquisition of the information which they can convey. Allowance, too, will have to be made for the fact that none of the four were good mediæval Latin scholars, for none of them had the advantage of a university education. Consequently in their transcription of old Latin records many mistakes will be found, and though these may be irritating to the modern student, they can easily be corrected. The opinion passed on the first Randle Holme by the late Mr. W. H. Black, F.S.A., Assistant Keeper of the Public Records, may virtually be applied to them all: "In short, he was an industrious and faithful copyist or collector of historical antiquities, but his philological learning was too scanty for him to use extreme accuracy on the one hand, or to invent any of the documents which he professed to transcribe, extract, or abridge on the other. Therefore his copies may be always relied on as faithfully transcribed in substance." Though the man of learned leisure has not yet appeared who can wade through these volumes and make us acquainted with the treasures they contain, yet it is true to say that no historian of Chester or of Cheshire can fulfil his purpose who does not either first-hand or second-hand (the former course being the better) derive a great deal of information from these industrious antiquarians of the seventeenth century. They have set an example which has been stimulating and fruitful, and it is only right that in a volume of this character generous and adequate expression should be given to the debt which we owe to them for the preservation of details and information which otherwise would have been irrevocably lost. They have left also in many of the churches in Chester and its neighbourhood many examples of their heraldic knowledge and skill in the memorials of deceased persons. Painted as these were on wood, many have disappeared; those that are still left are full of interest. May we not class these four Randle Holmes as amongst Chester's most notable worthies?

THE CHESTER MYSTERY PLAYS

By Joseph C. Bridge,
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Introduction.

THERE is no more interesting study in our early literature than the Mystery Plays which were once so popular throughout the length and breadth of England. It may be well to premise that their proper title is "Miracle" Plays, and no early writer ever alludes to them under any other name; nor was there in this country any difference between "Miracle" and "Mystery," as stated by some authorities. But custom has now definitely coupled the latter title with those early dramatic efforts of our forefathers, and it will be used in these pages.

Excluding odd ones, four great series of plays have come down to us, viz. those of York, Wakefield, Chester, and Coventry, and each place probably served as a centre of dramatic influence. While York acted as a stimulus to Wakefield itself and Newcastle, so Chester supported the dramatic efforts from Kendal in the north to Shrewsbury in the south and Dublin in the west.

Each series of plays possesses distinct characteristics, and, happily, Chester can claim that her plays have in them "less to offend and a more reverential tone" than many others, for it is useless to disguise the fact that many readers object to these plays as seeming to treat religious subjects with levity. But with a little reflection we shall see that these plays do not deserve such condemnation

if judged from the right standpoint, and that standpoint is assuredly *not* the twentieth century. We must throw ourselves back five centuries at least if we are to obtain a right focus. From the time of St. Paul, God's Word has been preached in divers ways and by divers methods, and we must not be surprised if the mediæval preacher was shrewd enough to use the dramatic instincts of the people as distributing media of religious knowledge.[1]

Let us remember that the Bible and religious books could not be read or consulted by the people; and as late as the seventeenth century we find an aged rustic who knew nothing of our Saviour except what he had learnt by seeing a *Corpus Christi* play at Kendal, where "there was," said he, "a man on a tree, and the blood ran down."

There is a good deal of strong argument put into the mouths of mediæval players by the old Wycliffe preacher, who makes them say that "by such playing of miracles men be converted to good living — and, since it is lawful to have the miracles of God painted, why is it not as lawful to have the miracles of God played, since men may better read the will of God and His marvellous works in the playing of them rather than in the painting of them . . . for this is a dead book, the other a quick?"

The introduction of humour into these sacred plays is no novelty. There is a broad touch of it as early as the time of Hilarius in his play of *St. Nicholas*, and we cannot deny that the writers of our Miracle Plays showed some skill in thus early lighting upon one of the greatest of dramatic rules, viz. the law of contrast.

Then, again, one other point, which is generally overlooked, must be taken into consideration. The Persons of God and our Saviour are treated with the *utmost* reverence. It is only when the common people come on the stage that we find a certain coarseness and humour. And this is no more than we should expect to find.

[1] Milton thought of writing *Paradise Lost* as a Mystery Play, but changed his mind.

These city actors would have thought it absurd to render shepherds as quiet, well-educated men. Did they not know plenty of shepherds round Chester who had hard times and hard fare, and whose only knowledge was of the diseases of animals? Were they not plagued with mischievous shepherd-boys who were ever ready for fun and play? And if Noah's wife was a shrew, were they not well acquainted with many such, and was not the scold's bridle and the ducking-stool kept at the Cross for such offending citizens? And can we blame them for looking upon many of the characters mentioned in the Bible as being ordinary everyday personages? I think not. However, opinions on this point will always be divided, and the following quotations from the writings of two well-educated women, who lived 100 years apart, are interesting:—

"Next he (Mr. Bryant) spoke upon the Mysteries, or origin of our theatrical entertainments, and repeated the plan and conduct of several of these strange compositions, in particular one he remembered, which was called *Noah's Ark*, and in which that patriarch and his sons, just previous to the Deluge, made it all their delight to speed themselves into the ark without Mrs. Noah, whom they wished to escape; but she surprised them just as they had embarked, and made so prodigious a racket against the door that, after a long and violent contention, she forced them to open it, and gained admission, having first contented them by being kept out till she was thoroughly wet to the skin.

"These most eccentric and unaccountable dramas filled up chief of our conversation; and whether to consider them most with laughter, as ludicrous, or with horror, as blasphemous, remains a doubt I cannot well solve."

So wrote that somewhat priggish but clever and witty young authoress, Miss Fanny Burney, in the eighteenth century.[1]

The following twentieth-century opinion is from a paper by the late Mrs. Henry Sandford, a woman of sound judgment and of great educational experience:—

"In the first place, we cannot but observe that, with all their faults, they did keep vividly before the mind of the English nation the leading outlines of

[1] It may be interesting to note that her father, Dr. Burney, was educated in Chester.

Christian teaching, and that, in the historical form suggested by the Apostles' Creed. Much that was legendary, coarse, incongruous, was there also, no doubt, but *that* was there above all.

"The old religious drama created in the popular mind a high ideal of the true use and purpose of dramatic art, namely, to present to the imagination a living picture of the realities of life and feeling."

But I will not pursue the arguments any further. Suffice it to say that the sense of humour and the representation of everyday life occur in all the arts of the Middle Ages. Those who would eliminate all this human part of the plays, or would forbid their use, must, to be consistent, rip the *Misereres* out of the choir of Chester Cathedral and burn them for firewood.

It is sometimes said that not only was there irreverence, but even indecency, especially in the play of the *Creation and Fall*, where Adam and Eve are commanded to "stand nackede." I believe this stage direction to be merely figurative,[1] and the Cornish play of the *Creation of the World*[2] gives a clue to the whole matter, as it contains specific instructions that Adam and Eve are to be "apparelled in white leather."[3] At Norwich also we know that Adam wore "a wig, gloves, and a cote of hosen steyned," and Eve "a wig, gloves, and two cotes of hosen steyned."

Further, there can be no doubt whatever that women were not allowed to take part in plays or to appear on the stage in public until some years after Mystery Plays had completely died out.[4]

Evidence of this may also be found in the music of the plays. In the Coventry Mysteries the "Lullaby," supposed

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[1] Thomas Wright, the able editor of the Chester plays, comes, I am glad to say, to the same conclusion.

[2] *The Creation of the World.* A Cornish Mystery, edited by Whitley Stokes.

[3] The Person of God was also occasionally represented in white leather with the face gilded.

[4] Miss Hamilton Moore, in *English Miracle Plays and Moralities*, seems to think that I assert in my Introduction to the *Chester Plays* (published for the revival in 1906) that women acted the play of *The Assumption*. Not so: I merely stated that the ale-wives of the city provided and furnished the play, but I am quite sure they did not perform it.

to be sung by the women in the *Slaughter of the Innocents*, actually has *Tenor and Bass parts*.[1]

Origin of Plays.

These plays sprang from the Church, and "all evidence points to Easter as the festival with which the earliest religious dramas were most intimately connected, and it is probable that the first form which the Easter play assumed was that of a ceremony in which the Crucifix was solemnly buried on Good Friday and again disinterred on Easter Day amid a pompous ritual." [2]

So long as the Church controlled the plays, the clergy were favourable to their performance; but when their popularity and their growth rendered it necessary to perform them out of doors, when the stage was pitched on the green or in the street before the Abbey gate, it became another matter.

The following rimes, written in 1303 by Robert Manning (Le Brunne), show this distinctly:—

> "Hyt ys forebode in the decree
> Miracles for to make or se
> For miracles yf you begynne
> Hyt ys a gaderynt, a syghte of synne
> He may in the churche, thurgh thys resun
> Play the resurrecyon.
>
> Yf thou do it in weyis or grenys
> A syghte of synne truly hyt semys."

As late as 1385 we find William of Wykeham objecting to the plays taking place in the churchyard, and threatening those who should lend vestments from the church to the actors.[3]

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[1] This trio would be sung by two men and a boy. Similarly the trio in Chester *Noah's Play* would be sung by the "Three clerkes from the Minster," who, as we shall see, were duly engaged as professionals.

[2] Professor Pollard.

[3] We must not forget that the Welsh played interludes in their churchyards on Sunday afternoons down to a very late period.

The opposition of the clergy might have been fatal to the continuance of Miracle Plays but for the Feast of Corpus Christi, which was instituted in 1264, and firmly established in 1311. On this day the people and the trade gilds took part in processions with the clergy, carrying pictures and images of saints, and sometimes accompanied by the members of the gilds dressed as angels, the twelve apostles, &c.[1] From this parade it was an easy step to dramatic representation; and this day was rigidly adhered to by the gilds as their great and common festival.

Chester has always had the credit of being an exception to the rule by holding the performances of the plays at Whitsuntide, but this view is incorrect, and Chester was, at first, in line with other places, for we find from the Bakers' Charter, 2 Edward IV. (which is the earliest authoritative allusion to the plays), that "there hath been tyme out of mind a company of bakers," and they are "to be redy to pay the costes and expenses and play and light of *Corpus Christi* as oft tymes as it shall be assessed."[2] Chester's gilds were numerous and powerful, and many of them exist in some form or other at the present day.

The authorship of the plays is generally attributed to Ralf Higden, the author of *Polychronicon*, and a monk of Chester, where he is said to have died at a great age in 1353. But there is no evidence to justify such a definite statement as this. All we know of the origin of the plays is found in the following :—

1. A "Banes," XV. Cent., giving Sir John Arneway as the "deviser." He was Mayor 1268–1276;
2. A Proclamation, *c.* 1520, giving Arneway as the "deviser," and Francis, a monk, as the writer.
3. A "Banes," *c.* 1570, giving Arneway as "deviser," and a "Dom Randall" as the writer.

[1] This is frequently to be seen in Italy at the present day.

[2] The alteration must have occurred very soon after this, for the "Banes," quoted later, which gives Whitsuntide as the time of the plays, cannot, I think, be much later than 1470.

4. An account of the plays, by Archdeacon Rogers, *c.* 1575; one version gives "Randall Higden" as the writer, and places the time in the mayoralty of Arneway, 1328; the other version gives "one Randoll a monke," Arneway as Mayor, and the date 1339.
5. An endorsement or a Proclamation in the Harleian MSS., supposed to be written by one of the Holmes, *c.* 1628, stating "Hignet" was the writer.
6. A similar endorsement on a copy of the plays of about the same date.

If the religious tendency of the Chester Plays was owing to a guiding hand from the monastery, that hand was, according to our earliest tradition, one Henry Francis, whose name occurs in deeds dated 1377–82. Higden was never mentioned until late in the sixteenth century.

It is quite possible that Henry Francis and Ralph Higden may have translated and revised some of the plays, and rendered literary help in reducing the cycle to unity, and that is all we can say with safety.[1] And this theory is supported by the fact that the closer the plays are studied, the more certain appears the fact that they are not by one hand.

Wright and Collier have pointed out many passages which are identical with the French plays published in the *Mystère du Vieux Testament.* Certain plays may therefore have been translated from the French. The *Sacrifice of Isaac* is probably derived from a play found at Broom Hall, Suffolk, or perhaps *both* are from some other original. Miss Toulmin Smith says :—

"Lines 163–314 have a strong resemblance to corresponding 134 lines in Chester version. This resemblance, sometimes of phrase, sometimes

[1] It seems to me sheer waste of time to try and synchronize Arneway and Higden as many writers do. I see no reason why we should not believe in the *earliest* tradition that Arneway *devised the plays.* The writing of them would be a gradual process, covering many years and involving, probably, several authors.

only of meaning, is interrupted by occasional passages in the Brome MS., which have no equivalents in Chester. Apparently, both editors worked upon a common original, but the Chester poet compressed the more freely, and, in so doing, greatly heightened the effect and dialogue. But he showed poor tact in omitting the charming scene between the father and the son after their agony is over. . . . It is possible, however, that the Chester play has come down to us mutilated. It was plainly at one time a separate play, and when amalgamated with that of *Abraham and Lot* may well have been cut down for greater convenience of performance."

The germ of the fine speech from the *Resurrection*, quoted later, may be found in the Wakefield play, where it begins as follows:—

> "Earthly man that I have wroght,
> Wightly wake and slepe thou noght!
> With bitter bayll I have thee boght
> To make thee free;
> Into this dongeon depe I soght,
> And all for luf of thee."

The *Three Kings* seems founded on a Latin play, and the exceptional plays of the series (Nos. 23 and 24) can be traced in that fine old poem the *Cursor Mundi*.

In *The Shepherd's Play* we certainly find the work of a local playwright, as references are made to a "jannock of Lancastershire," butter from Blacon (a suburb of Chester), and ale from Halton. Other examples might be given.

It seems probable that as the plays sprang from the Church, so the four great cycles now existing are derived from some greater and anterior cycle authorised by the Church.

We find numerous references in the Chester Companies' accounts to the original book of the play, which is generally called the "reginall."

This may in some cases refer merely to the special play-book belonging to the company, but it more often refers to the volume of the plays possessed by the City Corporation. If we still had this book we might settle many vexed questions. Unfortunately it is missing, for on April 30th, 1567, "Randall Trever gent was called before the Maior of

the Citie of Chester and was demaunded for the originall booke of the Whydson Plaies of the said Citie who then and ther confessed that he have had the same booke which book he deposeth upon the holy evangelist of God that by commaundement he delivered againe but where the same is now or to whom he then delivered the same book, deposeth likewise he knoweth not."

In the year 1883, Mr. Sutton (the chief librarian of the Manchester Free Library) found an old parchment book-cover, with some writing upon it, which he submitted to Dr. F. J. Furnivall, who pronounced it to be a portion of a late fifteenth century MS. of the Chester Plays. It is the commencement of the play of the *Resurrection*, and it is very probable—being on parchment—that it is a remnant of the original Chester Play Book.

We are therefore dependent upon certain transcriptions of the whole series of plays made at the end of the sixteenth century. When the plays were dying out, it is certain that some of the old citizens would desire to keep a "book of the words," hence the number of MSS. of that period.

The Chester MSS. extant are:—

a. 1591, by "Edward Gregorie a Scholar of Bunbury"; now in possession of the Duke of Devonshire.
b. 1592 } by George Bellin, Brit. Mus.: Add. MS. 10305;
c. 1600 } Brit. Mus.; Harl. 2013.
d. 1604, by William Bedford, Bodleian.
e. 1607, by James Miller, Brit. Mus.; Harl. 2124.
f. "The Resurrection" Play, by George Bellin, in the books of the Ironmongers' Company, Chester.[1]

George Bellin was parish clerk of Holy Trinity Church in Chester.[2] He wrote an excellent hand, was a member of

[1] Found by me last year. It is no doubt the "riginall" which the Company used, as they were responsible for the play. I have collated it with the other MSS., but the differences are not very important.

[2] "George Bellin ironmonger & Clarke of this p'rish bur: in the middle Ile 23 July 1624."—*Holy Trinity Registers.*

the Ironmongers' Company, and had doubtless often acted in the plays, and he is therefore, on the whole, a reliable guide, especially as to stage directions. He made some curious mistakes, and his French is very bad, but we must be grateful to him for his labours.

As already stated, Chester was fortunate in possessing, like York, London, and other great centres, a powerful array of Trade Gilds.[1] These City Companies provided workable units, and their power of organisation, the discipline exerted over their members, the brotherly feeling engendered by the Companies were all potent factors in the representation of these plays. "It made the performance a local work of art, in which all the city had a personal share. They believed with just pride that search England throughout none had the like, nor like does sett out."

The preparation of the plays occupied many months. There was keen competition between the various City Companies, and great pains were taken by the civic fathers to see that really competent players were chosen, and that no one should have an undue number of parts, and the Mayor frequently attended rehearsals.

Then the "Pageant carriages," [2] which had been securely housed since the last performance, had to be newly cleaned and repaired, and there needed much mending and repainting of the canvas and boards which represented "Heaven and Hell," "Morning and Night," or, as in "Noah's Play," was embellished with representations of birds, beasts, and fishes.

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[1] The City Gilds still hold an annual dinner in Chester, and in January 1908 representatives of some thirty Companies attended. Many of these Companies possess badges, flags, and documents of priceless interest; but in many cases they are insecurely kept.

[2] The carriages themselves were sometimes called "Pageants," and were kept in special houses. Most of the Gilds had their own, but sometimes two Gilds shared the cost between them. They were drawn by men, as a rule, *e.g.*:—

"To twelve porters of the cariage . . . . . iis. ivd."
—*Painters and Glaziers' Accounts.*

The stage manager's properties had also to be bought or borrowed throughout the town, and included many dozens of articles, ranging from a costly cope [1] down to the whistles [2] for the shepherd-boys and the ox tongue [3] for the old shepherd to put in his haversack, and it is obvious that the success of these plays depended greatly on the felicitous subdivision of work amongst the numerous City Companies, for no one manager could have supervised the whole.

The expenses were evenly divided among the members of the Company. Sometimes there was a "passive resister" who thought the plays nonsense, and that there should be "no more cakes and ale"; but he was speedily disillusioned, for the Mayor promptly clapped him into prison until he, or his friends, paid his proper [4] share.

It has been said that "no English play that has been preserved to us contains any mark of its representation by clerical actors," but we find that as late as the sixteenth century the "clerks from the Minster," the organist and choir boys, had no scruples about joining in the plays, and helping in those parts which required musical qualifications.

1561.	To Sir Jo: Jenson for songes [5] . . .	—	xii*d.*
,,	To the five boys for singing	ii*s.*	vi*d.*
1567.	To two of the clarkes of the Minster . .	—	viii*d.*
,,	To Mr. Whyte [6]	iiii*s.*	—

This appears to be the only time that they did so :—

"Item paid for a brode clothe againste the Witson plais .	vi*s.*	viii*d.*
Item for a barrell of bere to gene to the pleares to make them to drinke	vi*s.*	—
Item for packe thread at Witson daye to hange up the clothe	—	ii*d.*"

[1] "To the Clark for loan of a Cope an Altar Cloth and Tunick . . . . . x*d.*"
—*Smiths' Accounts.*

[2] "For two Wystylls for Trowe . . . . . iid.

[3] "For a beast's tongue and four calfe's feet . . . viiid."
—*Painters and Glaziers' Accounts.*

[4] Andrew Tailer of the Dyers' Company was thus treated in 1575.

[5] Senior Minor Canon.

[6] Organist and a very celebrated musician. It was probably due to his influence and co-operation that the Cathedral authorities joined in the preparation and plays, as appears from the Cathedral Treasurer's accounts for 1567.

1568.	To Mr. Rand' Barnes[1]	iii*s.*	iiii*d.*
,,	To Mr. Whyte for singing	iiii*s.*	—
,,	Spent on the Chanter and Clark of the Minster	—	v*d.*
1569.	For the Clergy for our songs	iiii*s.*	ii*d.*

But before the plays took place it was customary to send messengers on horseback and on stilts[2] to various places round the city[3] to read the "Banes," or "Banns," announcing the performance, and Bellin has left us a copy of the "Banes," which has been often printed, and is therefore here abbreviated. It is a curious document, for it is so extremely apologetic in tone, and notes even words in the plays which had become obsolete. The "Banes" is dated 1600, and it is possible that Bellin merely meant the date of his copying, but a careful study of it makes me suspect that there was in this year one last expiring effort made by the citizens to perform the plays, and that *this* "Banes" was specially written for the occasion. Although Archbishop Grindal had prohibited the plays in 1571, we know of performances up to 1576. In 1599, also, Henry Hardware, the Mayor, "was not liked by the commons," because he tried to do away with the Midsummer show and all festivity, but we are expressly told that next year the Mayor, Robert Brerewode, "restored again all the ancient customs . . . and put down Mr. Hardware," and he may have tried to revive the plays as well as the Midsummer show. However, no trace of any performance in 1600 has yet come to light.

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[1] Organist.

[2] "To our horses at the rydyng of the Banes . . . . . xvi*d.*
"To Richard Dobie for going on the stilts at the Banes ryding" —
—*Painters and Glaziers' Accounts.*

Some of the performers from the Mayor's Midsummer show gradually got grafted on to the "Banes Riding," and increased the importance of it.

[3] The Castle and the North Gate were two of the appointed places, and the "Banes" would be heard by the wretched prisoners there, to whom a donation was generally accorded:—

"To the prisoners at the Castle . . . . . i*d.*
To the prisoners at the North Gate . . . . . i*d.*"
Painters and Glaziers' Accounts.

THE BANES

WHICH ARE READE BEEFORE THE BEGINNINGE OF THE PLAYES OF CHESTER, 4 JUNE 1900.

Reverende lordes & ladyes all,
That at this tyme here assembled bee,
By this message understand you shall
That some tymes there was Mayor of this Citie
Sir John Arnway, Knighte, who most worthilye
Contented hymselfe to sett out in playe
The devise of one Done Rondall, moonke of Chester Abbey.

This moonke, moonke-like, in Scriptures well seene,
In storyes travilled with the beste sorte,
In pagentes set fourth apparently to all eyne
The olde & new testament, with livelye comforth,
Interminglinge therewith, only to make sporte,
Some thinges not warranted by any writt,
Which to gladd the hearers he woulde men to tyke yt.

This matter he abrevited into playes twenty-foure,
And every playe of the matter gave but a taste,
Leavinge for better learninge the scircumstance to accomplishe;
For all his proceedinges maye appeare to be in haste,
Yet all together unprofitable his labour he did not waste;
For at this daye & ever he deserveth the fame
Which all monkes deserves, professinge that name.

These storyes of the Testamente at this tyme, you knowe,
In a common Englishe tongue never read nor harde;
Yet thereof in these pagentes to make open shewe,
This moonke & moonke was nothing afreayde,
With feare of hanginge, breninge, or cutting off heade,
To sett out, that all maye disserne & see
And parte good be lefte, beleeve you mee.

As all that shall see them shall moste welcome be,
Soe all that here them wee moste humble praye
Not to compare this matter or storie
With the age or tyme wherein we presentlye staye,
But in the tyme of ignorance, wherein we did straye;
Then doe I compare that this lande throughout
Non had the like, nor the like dose sett out.

. . . . . .

This worthy Knighte, Arnway, then mayor of this Citie,
This order took, as declare to you I shall,
That by twenty-fower occupations, artes, crafts, or misterie,
These pagentes shoulde be played, after breeffe rehearsall;
For everye pagente a cariage to be provyded withall;
In which sorte we porpose, this Whitsontyde,
Our pageantes into three partes to devyde.
. . . . . .

But a much older and more valuable "Banes" has been found by Canon Morris amongst the Harleian MSS.[1] (not numbered or catalogued), and has been printed in his *Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor Periods*.[2]

THE BANES OR PROCLAMATION OF THE PLAYES.

The comen bannes to be proclaymed and Ryddon with the Stewardys of every occupacon :—

Lordings Royall and Reverentt
Lovelie ladies that here be lentt
Sovereigne Citizens hether am I sent
A message for to say.

I pray you all that be present
That you will here with good intent
And all your eares to be lent
Hertfull I you pray.

Our worshipfull mair of this Citie
With all his royall cominaltie
Solem pagens ordent hath he
At the fest of Whitsonday tyde.

How every craft in his decree
Bryng forth their playes solemplie
I shall declare you brefely
Yf ye will a while abyde.

The worshipfull tanners of this towne
Bryng forth the heavenly manshon
Th' orders of angells and theire creation
According done to the best.

---

[1] Collected by the Randle Holme family of Chester.
[2] By his kind permission printed here.

And when the angells be made so clere
Then folowyth the falling of Lucifere
To bring forth this play with good chere
The tanners be full prest.

You worshipfull men of the draperye
Loke that paradyse be all redye
Prepare also the mappa mundi
Adam and eke Eve.

The waterleders and drawers of Dee
Loke that Noyes shipp be sett on hie
That you lett not the storye
And then shall you well chrue.

The barburs and wax channdlers also that day
Of the Patriarche you shall play
Abram, that put was to assay
To sley Isack his sonne.

The cappers and pynners forth shall bring
Balack that fears [fierce] and mightie Kyng
And Balam on an asse sytting:
Loke that this be done.

Youe wrights and slaters will be fayne
Bring forth your cariage of Marie myld quene,
And of Octavian so cruell and kene
And also of Sybell the sage.

For findyng of that Royal thing
I grant you all the blessing
Of the high imperiall King
Both the maister and his page.

Paynters glasiars and broderers in fer
Have taken on theym with full good chere
That the Sheppards play then shall appere
And that with right good wyll.

The vynteners then as doth befall
Bringe forth the 3 Kings Royall
Of Colyn or pagent memoryall
And worthy to appere.

Then shall you see how that Kynges all
Came bouldly into the hall
Before Herode proude in paulle
Of Crysts byrth to heare.

The mercers worshipfull of degre
The presentation that have yee
Hit falleth best for your see
By right reason and style
Of caryage I have no doubt
Both within and without
It shall be deckyd y^{t} all the Rowte
Full gladly on it shall be to loke
With sundry cullors it shall glime
Of velvit satten and damaske fine
Taffyta sers-nette of poppyngee grene.

The gouldsmyths then full soone will hye
And masons theyre craft to magnifye
Theis two crafts will theim applye
Theyre worshipp for to wynne
How Herode King of Galalye
For that intent Cryste to distrye
Slew the Innocents most cruely
Of tow yeres and within.

Semely smythis also in hyght
A lovely caryage the will dyght
Candilmas day for soth it hyght
The find it with good will.

The buchers pagene shall not be myst
How Satan tempted our Savyour Cryst
It is an history of the best
As witnesseth the gospell.

Nedys must I rehers the glover
The give me gloves and gay gere
The find the toumbs of Lazarey
That pagene cometh next.

Also the corvesers with all their myght
The fynde full fayre syght
Jerusalem their caryage hyght
For so sayth the text.

And the bakers also be dene
The find the Maunday as I wene
It is a carriage full well besene
As then it shall appeare.

Flechers bowyers with great honours
The Cowpers find the Tormentors
That bobbyde God with gret honors
As he sat in his chere [chair].

The Iron mongers find a caryage good
How Jesus dyed on ye rode
And shed for us his precyus blud
The find it in fere.

Cryst after his passion
Brake Hell for our redempcion
That find the cookes and hostelers of this towne
And that with full good chere.

Also the skynners they be boune
With great worshipp and renowne
They find the Resurection
Fayre maye them befall.

Sadlers and Foysters ["Fusterers"] have the good grace
They find the Castell of Emawse
Where Crist appered to Cleophas
A faire pagend you shall see.

Also the Taylers with trew Intent
Have taken on them verament
The Assencyon by one assent
To bringe it forth full right.

Fysshe mongers men of faith
As that day will doe their stayth
To bringe there caryage furth in trayth
Wyt Sonday it hight.

The worshipfull wyves of this towne
Ffyne of our lady thassumpcon
It to bryng forth they be bowne
And meyntene with all theyre might.[1]

The Shermen will not [be] behynd
Butt bryng theire cariage with good mynde
The pagent of prophettys they do fynd
That prophecied ffull truly
Off the coming of Anticrist
That goodys ffaith would resist
That cariage I warrand shall not myst
Butt sett forth full dewly.

---

[1] Played in 1488.

The hewsters that be men full sage
They bryng forth a wurthy cariage
That is a thing of grett costage
Antycryst hit hight.
They weyvers in very dede
Ffynd the day of Dame, well may they spede
I graunt them holly to theire neede
The blysse of heven bright.

Sovereigne syrs to you I say
And to all this ffayre cuntre
That played shalbe this godely play
In the whitson weke
That is brefely for to sey
Uppon Monday Tuysday and Wennysday
Whoo lust to see theym he may
And non of theym to sek.

"Erased in the Booke."

Also maister maire of this Citie
Withall his bretheryn accordingly
A solempne procession ordent hath he
To be done to the best
Appon the day of Corpus Christi
The blessed sacrament caried shalbe
And a play sett forth by the clergye
In honor of the fest
Many torches there may you see
Marchaunts and craftys of this citie
By order passing in their degree
A goadly sight that day
They come from Saynt Maries on the Hill
The Church of Saynt Johns untill
And there the sacrament leve they will
The sauth [sooth] as I you say.

Whoo so comyth these plays to see
With good devocon merelye
Hertely welcome shall he be
And have right good chere.
Sir John Arnway was maire of this citie
When these playes were begon truly
God graunt us merely
And see theym many a yere.

Now have I done that lyeth in me
To procure this solempnitie
That these playes contynued may be
And well sett fourth alway.

Jhu [Jesu] Crist that syttys on hee
And his blessed mother Marie [*erased*]
Save all this goodely company
And kepe you nyght and day.

With regard to the Banes we must notice first that it is in the same metre and rhyming stanza as the Plays themselves, and may have been written with them. Secondly, it sheds light on some very important points. Here is one:—

"The worshipfull wyves of this towne
Ffyne of our lady thassumpcon
It to bryng forth they be bowne
And meyntene with all theyre might."[1]

Here we have *The Assumption* definitely classed as one of the Chester series (a point hitherto unknown), and also, we see that it was provided by women; this is unique, I think. In none of the other cycle centres do the women manage a play by themselves.[2]

Again,

"Also maister maire of this Citie
Withall his bretheryn accordingly
A solempne procession ordent hath he
To be done to the best
Appon the day of Corpus Christi
The blessed sacrament caried shalbe
And a play sett forth by the clergye,
In honor of the fest.

---

[1] It is worth noting, that in 1483, at York, four men came before the Mayor, "& by the assent of all the Innholders of this said Citie tuke upon them to bring furth yerely during the term of VIII. yere, then next folluying the pagent of the Coronacion of our Lady perteyning to the said Innholders, etc." It seems likely, then, that the "worshipful wyves" were the ale-wives of Chester, and it is by no means improbable that Chester again followed the lead of York. As Mrs. Green says, "Cooks and brewers and hostellers were naturally deeply interested in the preservation of the good old customs, and it was, in some cases, certainly this class (the most powerful in a mediæval borough), who raised the protest against the indifference and neglect of the townspeople for public processions and merry-making, because 'thereby the victuallers lose their money'; and who insisted on the revival of these festivals for the encouragement of trade."—*Town Life XV. Century*, i. p. 153.

[2] Canon Morris says: "It is omitted from Bellin's transcript in 1600, and was, in all probability, discontinued in Edward VI.'s reign, in deference to the religious feeling of the time."

Many torches there may you see
Marchaunts and craftys of this citie
By order passing in their degree
A goadly sight that day.
They come from Saynt Maries on the Hill
The Church of Saynt Johns untill
And there the sacrament leve they will
The sauth as I you say."

It will be seen that the Mayor and Corporation had ordered a procession at Corpus Christi, and that the clergy were to provide a play. What this play was we have, unfortunately, no means of knowing.

This may account for the transference of the gild plays to Whitsun week. The clergy, anxious to have the Corpus Christi procession to *themselves* without the trade gilds, may have said to the citizens, "If you will have your plays at another time we will, at our own charge and expense, provide a play on Corpus Christi, so that there shall be no loss to the citizens in that respect."[1] Thus the plays got transferred to Whitsuntide.

My third quotation must be:—

"Sir John Arnway was maire of this citie[2]
When these playes were begon truly
God graunt us merely
And see theym many a yere."

This is the earliest mention of their origin.

At last the momentous Monday in Whit-week arrived, and early in the morning the first car started from the great gates of the Abbey, where the Abbot and his followers sat in state, and proceeded down the street to the High Cross, where the Mayor and Corporation were assembled. As each car finished its play, its place was taken by another, and so in regular succession and at appointed places, the whole series of plays was gone through in three days. By this sensible and orderly arrangement a citizen could retain

[1] This is precisely what happened at York, where after 1426 the Corpus Christi procession and the plays were separated.
[2] Arneway was Mayor, 1268–76.

his standing place or seat, and be assured of missing nothing. No doubt seats at the performing points commanded a premium, and documents exist of an interesting law-suit between two citizens with reference to the right to occupy a "roome or place for the Whytson plaies in the Bridge-gate streets in the Cyty of Chester."

We can imagine the pride of the Cestrian housewife when she saw her husband magnificently dressed as "Herod," or her sons in parti-coloured costumes as "devils" rushing from the bottom to the top of the car only to disappear in "Hell's mouth" amidst fire, smoke, and sulphur, and the laughter and applause of her neighbours; and may not she have felt a holy thrill when, perhaps, her youngest boy on bended knee offered his small shepherd's pipe or his nutting stick as a gift to the "Lord of all"?

Depend upon it Chester was full of legitimate pride on such occasions, for, as the citizens said in their Banes, "None had the like, nor the like did sett out."

And the educational force of this cannot be over-estimated. The young citizen when he took up the freedomship of his company, took up also duties of stage craft and stage management which had been traditional for generations in that company. If he possessed ability as an actor he had no difficulty in obtaining a part to play, and if he could not act then he found plenty to do in preparation for the play, which *esprit de corps* demanded should not be behind other companies.

And so the Elizabethan drama found a people already prepared, by centuries of familiarity with the stage as an amusement, to respond to the demands good plays might make on their imagination and receptive faculties. The Mysteries were but young plants—Shakespeare was the fruit.

The fact is, the whole country was given up to plays of this sort, and we know of more than one hundred towns and villages which enjoyed these entertainments. The annual play at Wymonham (or Windham), in Norfolk, lasted two days and two nights; and the inhabitants of

Lydd, in Kent, were so keen that they went to the play on a Sunday, while watchmen were paid to keep guard on the shore against a surprise from the French.

If the trade gilds showed any desire to shirk such representations, the Mayor could, and did, issue a notice commanding a performance; and it was also the Mayor's duty, as officer of the King's peace, to issue proclamations on all festive occasions of this sort.

The ordinances of the Mayor of York, in 1394 and subsequently, show that the regulations to control the plays and populace were most stringent and comprehensive, and that the plays began as early as 4.30 A.M.

In addition to the ordinary series of Chester Mystery Plays, we find that the play of the *Assumption* was performed at the High Cross in 1488, and before Prince Arthur in 1497, both at the Abbey gates and at the High Cross; and also in 1515 in St. John's Churchyard. We find, also, the Cappers, Pewterers, and Smiths undertaking plays in 1520–1; and that in 1529 *King Robert of Sicily* had been performed at the High Cross.

THE PLAYS

The number of plays now existing is twenty-five, but we know that the *Assumption* has been lost, and there are signs of two plays being compressed into one, as in the *Histories of Lot and Abraham*, so that the original number was no doubt larger. Fluctuations would undoubtedly take place with the rise and fall of City Companies, if for no other reasons. As the number of gilds expanded or were reduced, so the plays were increased or amalgamated.[1] The list of plays and the gilds that performed them will be found in the "Banes" already printed. The Chester series is noted for two plays that occur nowhere else, viz. No. 23, on *Prophecies*, and No. 24, on *Anti-Christ*.

[1] At York the MS. of the plays (*c.* 1430) shows 48; but in 1415 there had been 51; and another earlier list shows 57.

The English employed seems to be of the beginning of the fifteenth century, many of the stage directions are in Latin, and the Three Kings, Octavian, and Herod occasionally use French, that being the Court language.[1]

It is not to be supposed that we have the text of the plays as written *at first*, for the original plays are without doubt much older than the fifteenth century. We find that the quarrels of Noah and his wife formed so familiar a story that they became proverbial. Chaucer says :—

> "Hast thou not heard (quod Nicholas) also
> The sorowe of Noe with his felowship
> Or that he might get his wife to ship."

Chaucer wrote this about 1390, and it appears certain, therefore, that our play of *Noah*, and probably those on the same subject at Wakefield and Newcastle-on-Tyne, were often performed by the middle of the fourteenth century.

The metre employed varies, but a large proportion is in eight line stanzas, sometimes with two rimes :—

a a a b
a a a b

and sometimes with three ;

a a a b
c c c b

as may be seen in the following example :—

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

THE CORVYSORS PLAYE

Pagina decima Quarta, de Jesu intrante domum Simonis Leprosi, et de aliis rebus.

JESUS.

Brethren, goe we to Bethanye, a
To Lazarre, Martha, and Marye, a
For I love moche their companye ! a b

[1] It is not generally considered to afford any argument as to the plays being derived from the French.

Thedder nowe will I wende.
Symond the Leaper hath praied me
In his house to take charatye ; a a a b
With them nowe it liketh me
A whyle for to lende.

PETRUS.

Lorde, all readye shall we be
In life and death to goe with thee ;
Greate joye they maye have to see a a a b
Thy cominge into their place.

PHILIPPE.

Lazarre thou raysed through thy pittie,
And Symonde also, messille was he,
Thou clensed, Lorde, that wotten we, a a a b
And holpe them through thy grace.

Tunc ibunt versus domum Simonis Leprosi.

LAZARRUS.

Welckome, Lorde, sweete Jesu,
Blessed be the tyme that I thee knewe !
From death to liffe through thy vertue a a a b
Thou raysed me not yore ;
Fower dayes in eairth when I [had] layne,
Thou granteste me life againe.
Thee I honoure with all my mayne, c c c b
Nowe and ever more.

But other metres are frequently used.

A very fine dramatic effect is produced in some of the plays by the sudden use of the short Skeltonian metre. In the play of the *Passion* the Tormentors cry :—

And thou be messye
And loth for to lye
Who smote thee? Crye
If thou be Christe.

Now he is bounden
Be he never so wounden
Soon he shall be founden
With flaps in fear.

In woe he is wounden
And his grain is grounden,
No lad unto London
Such law can him lere (teach).

Again in the *Crucifixion*:—

SECUNDUS JUDAEUS.

This coat shall be mine,
For it is good and fine
And seam is not therein
That I can see.

TERCIUS JUDAEUS.

Yea, God give me pain
And (if) that shall be thine,
For thou art ever incline
To draw towards thee.

QUARTUS JUDAEUS.

Nay, fellow, by this day
At the dice we will play,
And there we shall essay
That weed for to win.

SECUNDUS JUDAEUS.

His other clothes all
To us four can fall;
First part them I shall
And after play for this.

This kyrtel mine I call,
Take thou this pall,
Each man in this hall
Note I do not amiss.

Again, we get later rhythms grafted on to the original, as in the drinking trio sung by Noah's wife and her gossips in *Noah's Play*.

THE GOOD GOSSIPS' SONG.

The flood comes flitting in full fast,
On every side it spreads full far;
For fear of drowning I am aghast;
Then, good gossips, let us draw near.

And let us drink ere we depart,
For often times we have done so;
For at a draught thou drinkest a quart,
And so will *I* do ere I go.

The "Song" concludes with what is probably a portion of the original trio. The other half stanza is unfortunately lost :—

Here is a pottle good and strong,
It will rejoice both heart and tongue;
Though Noah thinks us never so long,
Here we will drink alike.[1]

A similar instance is the Ale-wife's speech, which has been tacked on to the end of the play *The Harrowing of Hell.*

In the *Resurrection* play we have the following. It is one of the finest speeches in the plays :—

JESUS.

Earthly man that I have wrought,
Awake out of thy sleep;
Earthly man that I have bought,
Of me thou hast no keep.
From heaven man's soul I sought,
Into a dungeon deep,
My dear leman from thence I brought,
For ruth of her I weep.
I am very prince of peace,
And king of free mercy;
Who will of sinnès have release
On me they call and cry.
And if they will of sinnès cease,
I grant them peace truly,
And thereto a full rich messe
In bread my own body.
I am very bread of life;
From heaven I light and am sende,
Who eateth that bread, man or wife,
Shall live with me without end.
And that bread that I give you,
Your wicked life for to amend,
Becomes my flesh through your belief,
And doth release your sinful band.

[1] With revised spelling the whole has a very modern "ring" about it. The first two verses may have been sung as a solo and the last half stanza as a trio.

And whosoever eateth that bread
In sin or wicked life,
He receiveth his own death,
I warn both man and wife.

Three personages other than actors sometimes occupied the stage—a Preco or page, an expositor, and a messenger. They all three appear in the play of *The Histories of Lot and Abraham.* The page appears on the "pageant carriage" immediately after the play of *Noah's Flood*, and says:—

All lordings that be here present,
And hearken me with good intent,
How Noah away from us he went,
And all his company;
And Abraham, through God's grace,
He is comen into this place,
And ye will give us room and space
To tell you of story.

This play, forsooth, begun shall be
In worship of the Trinity,
That you may all hear and see
That shall be done to-day;
My name is Gobbet-on-the-Green,
With you I may no longer bene;
Farewel, my lordes, bydene
For letting of your play.

The expositor or doctor takes care that the play is "understanded of the people." He appears early in the play on horseback, and says:—

Lordinges, what maye this signify
I will expound it appeartlye,
That the unlearned standing here by
May know what this may be.[1]

He interrupts at different points, and explains the rite of circumcision and the offering up of Isaac, and then we have

[1] Being on horseback, he would, of course, be more easily heard by the crowd. Everything in the play points to the fact that it was looked upon as a means of instruction for the people, and not a mere amusement. The play itself consists of two plays compressed into one, and seems to be one of the oldest of the series.

the remarkable and significant fact that the crowd joins him in prayer.

Here let the docter knele downe, and saie,

Such obedience grante us, O Lorde!
Ever to thy moste holye worde,
That in the same we may accorde
As this Abraham was bayne;
Then al togaither shall we
That worthy kinge in heaven see,
And dwell with him in greate glorye,
For ever and ever, Amen.

His place is now filled by a messenger, who announces the next play. The stage direction is—

Here the messenger maketh an ende.

Make rombe, lordinges, and give us waye,
And let Balacke come in and plaie,
And Balame that well can saie
To tell you of prophescie.
That Lord that died on Good Frydaie,
He save you all bouth nighte and daie!
Fare well, my lordinges; I goe my waie,
I may no longer abyde.

The ordinary reader has little or no idea of the literary and dramatic value of the plays, owing to the fact that printed copies are not easily accessible.

I have thought it well, therefore, to print (in a slightly shortened form) and to explain the following play.

It embodies most of the points mentioned in this article, it has distinct literary and artistic value, and, above all, the character of Herod made it the most popular play of the cycle, and is often allnded to.

Shakespeare uses the phrase "out-Heroding Herod." Chaucer says of Joly Absalon :—

Sometyme to shewe his lightness and maistrye
He pleyeth Herodes on a scaffold hye.

In the Paston letters we find Sir John Paston's agent, in describing the high-handed proceedings of the Duke of Norfolk in 1478, saying, "There was no man that played

Herod in *Corpus Christi* play better and more agreeable to his pageant than *he* did."

It will be seen, I think, that the verdict of the general public was a sound and good one.

THE EIGHTH PAGEANT—"THE THREE KINGS."

Presented by the Vintners.

This must have been a striking sight, for the Three Kings, richly apparelled, accompanied the pageant-carriage on horseback through the city, and the First King tells how they are looking for the fulfilment of Balaam's prophecy and seeking a sign.

FIRST KING.

Mighty God in majesty,
That ruleth the people of Judye,
When thou on man wilt have pity
And his sins for-bye,

Send some tokening, Lord, to me,
That ylke star that we may see
That Balaam said should rise and be
In his prophecy.

For well I wot, forsooth, I wis,
That his prophecy sooth is,
A star should rise betokening bliss
When God's son is born.

Therefore, these lords and I in fere (company)
In this mount make our prayer
Devoutly once in the year,
For thereto we be sworn.

Then they dismount, and the Third King hands his horse to attendants :—

"Say, fellows, take this courser
And abyde me right here,
Go we, sirs, to our prayer
I rede now in good faye ;
I have done this many a year,
And my ancestors that before me were.
High God, prince of power,
Thou comfort us this day."

Then they proceed on to the pageant-carriage which represented the "mountain" they had to ascend. On reaching the top, an angel appears carrying a star, and now the Kings burst forth into French:—

FIRST KING.

A, Sir Roy, si vous plaist
Gardez sus sur votre test.

SECOND KING.

Une Esteile issi est
Que sir, vous repleist.

THIRD KING.

A loys soyt luy une semblant
De une virgin portant
Comme le semble de une Infant
Embrace apportement.

Then they fall on their knees, and the angel says:—

A! rise up, ye Kings three,
And come along after me
Unto the land of Judye
As fast as you may hie;
The child ye seek there shall ye see,
Borne all of a maiden free,
That King of heaven and earth shall be,
And all mankind for-bye.

Then followed an incident which must have given great pleasure to the sightseers, for the Kings descended into the street[1] and mounted imitation dromedaries! The Second King says:—

Yea, sirs, I rede us every one
Dromodaryes to ride upon,
For swifter beasts be there none.
One I have, you shall see.

To which the Third King replies:—

A dromodary in good faye
Will go lightly on his way
A hundred miles upon a day,
Such coursers now take we.

[1] In the Coventry plays Herod "rages in the pagond and in the streete also."

And then one MS. has the stage direction :—

"*Then the Kinges go doune to the beasts and ride about.*"[1]

After circling round the pageant-carriage they ascend it again, and then, the star having disappeared, they are in doubt as to the right way, but fortunately meet with a messenger or "explorator."

FIRST KING.

Can thou say ought what place and where
A child is born that crown shall bear
And of the Jews be king?

SECOND KING.

We saw a star shine verily
In the East in noble array,
Therefore we come now this way
To worship him with win.

MESSENGER.

Hold your peace, sir, I you pray
For if King Herod heard you so say
He would go mad, by my fay
And fly out of his skin.

THIRD KING.

And sith a king is so near
Go we to him in all manner.

MESSENGER.

You may well see he wounes here (lives here
A palace in to dwell.
But moy he wot, withouten were,
That any is born of more power,
You bring yourselves in great danger
Such tydinges for to tell.

---

[1] Chester was accustomed to produce beasts of this sort. In 1564 an agreement between the mayor and two citizens shows that the latter undertook to provide yearly for 40s. "4 gyants, 1 unikorne, 1 dromodarye, 1 Luce, 1 Camel, 1 Dragon," &c. These were for the midsummer play. Each beast required two men to work it.

"*Here the messenger goeth to the King and the mynstrilles must play*," and the Kings are then introduced to Herod, and Court language again is spoken.

FIRST KING.

Sir Roy, royale et reverent,
Dieu vous gardes Omnipotent.

HEROD.

Bien soies venues, rois gente;
Me dites toute votre intent.
(Welcome, stranger kings;
Tell me what is your intent.)

THIRD KING.

Infant, queruns de grand parent
Et roi de ciel et terre.
(Seeking a child of great parentage
And king of Heaven and Earth.)

Then Herod bursts forth in the following fine ranting speech:[1]—

HEROD.

Sirs, advise ye what you sayen;
Such tidings make my heart unfayne;
I rede you take these words again,
For fear of villany.

There is none so great that me dare gain
To take my realm, and to attain
My power, but he shall have pain
And be punished apertly.

I, king of kings, none so keen;
I, soveraign sire, as well is seen;
I, tyrant, that may both take and teen
Castle, tower, and towne,

I wield this world withouten wene,
I beat all those unbuxsome beene,
I drive the devils all by deene
Deep in hell adowne.

[1] It compares very favourably with the "Coventry" play, where the ranting oversteps the mark and becomes balderdash.

For I am king of all mankind;
I bid—I beat—I loose—I bind,
I master the moon: Take this in mind
That I am most of might.

I am the greatest above degree
That is, or was, or ever shall be.
The sun it dare not shine on me
If I bid him go down.

No rain to fall shall none be free
Nor no Lord have that liberty
That dare abide, and I bid flee,
But I shall crack his crown.

Nor far nor near that doth me (an)noy
Who wrathes me, I shall destroy;
For every freak I dare defie
That nill me pay ne please.

But you be bayne, I shall you beat,
There is no man for you shall treat;
[*Then aside*] All for wrath see how I sweat;
My heart is not at ease.

And to carry out his pretence that he is not frightened but quite cool, he throws his sword up in the air and dexterously catches it while he continues :—

For all men may witte and see,
Both he and you all three,
That I am King of Galilee
Whatsoever he saith or does.
What the devil should this be!
A boy—a groom of low degree
Should reign above my Royalty
And make me but a goose!

The Kings then answer :—

By prophecy well wotten we
That a childe born should be
To rule the people of Judye
As was said many a year.

Herod says :—

Other kings shall none here be
. . . . .
But seeing you speak of prophecy
Whether ye speak sooth or lye
My clarke soon shall see.

He then bids his "chief of clergy" to look up the books of prophecy and tell him what they say.

Then the doctor reads the scriptures, and amongst other prophecies says :—

DOCTOR.

Daniel, fulfilled with heavenly grace,
Prophesied also by divine inspiration,
That when he was came, that all holy was,
The most holiest in earth, to take his habitation
In the womb of a virgin, and by his blessed incarnation
Out of Satan's band to deliver mankind,
Whom sin original piteously did bind,
Then both unctions, sacrifices and rites ceremonial
Of the Old Testament with legal observation,
Shall utterly cease and take their end final,
Through Christ's coming which for man's salvation
A New Testament shall ordain by divine operation
Offering himself in Sacrifice for mankind's offence,
Which from Heaven was exiled through his great negligence.

HEROD.

Fie on that dream, reader ! such dotards never shall
Nor no sleeping sluggard make my right title cease
But I shall knightly keep it, whatsoever befall,
Against that young godling, and if he once do press
This kingdom to claim, or put me to distress
His head off shall I hew. . . .
Yet look if thou find there
Where this boy is born for whom these kings enquire.

DOCTOR.

Micheias, enflamed with ghostly inspiration,
Prophesied that Bethlehem should a prince forth bring
Ruler of God's people and of the Jew's nation
Should he be born of Israel to be king.
. . . . . .

Esay, unto whom the spirit of prophecy
Was singularly given through the Holy Ghost
In this time prophesied that kings witterly,
And folk of strange nations from many a sundry coast,
That prince's birth to magnify which of might is most
Should walk in great light, and brightness should appear
As did unto these kings in a bright star shining clear.

HEROD (*throwing his sword down*).

Alas, what presumption should move that peevish page
Or any elfish godling to take from me my crown?
But by Mahomet! that boy for all his great outrage
Shall die under my hand, that elfe and vile congeon!
And all his partakers I shall slay and beat down,
And both of him and his final destruction make
Such vengeance, and such cruelty on them all will I take,
That none such a slaughter was seen or heard beforne
Sith Athalia here reigned. . . .
Yet look and search again
If these kings shall find him and his presence attain.

DOCTOR.

David of all prophets called most prepotent
Prophesied that kings from Tharsis and Araby
With mystical gifts shall come and present
That lord, that king, and high Messie (Messiah),
That in Bethlehem shall be borne,
A child to save that was forlorne,
And rule all Israel.

HEROD (*breaking his sword in his rage*).

By Mahoun! thou art foresworn.
Have done; these books were best rent and torn.
[*Throws the book on the floor.*
For he shall be no king in crown
But I fully in my weal.
And mauger David, that shepherd with his sling
Esay, Jeremy with all their offspring
Here get no other Messiah nor king
From my right title to expel,
. . . . .
This realm is mine and shall be aye
Manfully to maintain it while I may.
Tho' he bring with him to-day
The devil and all his host.

Then, concealing his anger, he turns to the Kings and suavely says :—

But go ye forth ye kings three
And enquire if it so be
But always come again to me,
For you I think to feed.
And if he be of such degree
Him will I honour as do ye,
As falls for his dignity,
In word, thought and deed.

FIRST KING.

By leave, sir, and have good day
Till we come again this way.

SECOND KING.

Sir, as soon as ever we may
And as we see so shall we say.

THIRD KING.

And of his riches and his array
From you we shall not leave.

HEROD.

Farewell Lords, in good faye
But hye you fast again.

Immediately the Kings retire, Herod breaks forth again :—

Out alas ! what the devil is this ?
For shame almost I fare amiss
For was I never so cool, I wyss
For wrath I am near woode (mad) !
For every man may well say this
That I maintain my realm amiss
To let a boy inherit my bliss
That never was of my blood.

But to-morrow he will—

Raise the country on every side,
All that may ever go or ride ;
So shall this boy lose his pride
For all his greatest boast.

Now he can do no more, and he sinks back, exhausted, into a chair :—

> This boast doth me so great annoy
> That I wax dull and clean dry.
> Have done !—and fill the wine in high,
> I die but I have drink.
> Fill fast and let the cups fly
> And go we hither hastily ;
> For I must ordain curiously
> Against these Kings coming.

Such is the play of *The Three Kings*, and there can be no doubt whatever of its fine dramatic effect. We cannot wonder that this character of Herod is mentioned by old writers more than other characters of the plays. Imperious and proud, firmly believing in his own kingly right, but, like most ignorant people, profoundly impressed by prophecies and vaticinations which he did not understand, Herod is now impelled forward by swaggering pride and now dragged back by craven fear and subtle influences.

The part gives the actor every opportunity to show forth his art, and the calm, clear tones of the doctor quietly reading the scriptures give the required dramatic contrast. The speeches show the traces of late literary labour, and that we had got within measurable distance of blank verse when the play received its last polish, though the original play was probably founded on an early Latin one called *Herodes, sive magorum adoratio.*[1]

> " Postea Herodes interroget Scribas, dicens :
> O vos scribae
> Interrogati dicite
> Si quid de hoc puero
> Scriptum videritis in libro.
>
> Tunc Scribae diu revolvant librum, et tandem inventa quasi prophetica dicant. . . .
>
> Vidimus, Domine, in prophetarum
> Lineis, nasci Christum
> In Bethleem Iudae civitate
> David propheta sic vaticinante.
>
> Tunc Herodes, visa prophetica, furore accensus, *projiciat librum*," &c.

[1] See Wright's *Early Mysteries*, p. 26.

This play, together with the play of *The Salutation and the Nativity* and *The Shepherds' Play*, was acted at Chester in 1906 by Mr. Nugent Monck and his "English Drama Company" under the auspices of the Chester and North Wales Archæological Society, and with success, but the expense was too great to admit of the whole cycle being performed. The same plays have also been performed in London by Mr. Monck's company, and by Mr. Benson's company at Stratford-on-Avon during the Shakespeare Commemoration week.

In conclusion, I would point out that the motto of the city of Chester is curious and indeed unique :—

"ANTIQUI COLANT ANTIQUUM DIERUM."

"Let the ancient people worship the Ancient of Days."

I cannot help thinking that this contains an occult reference to the Chester Mystery Plays.

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THE SIEGE OF CHESTER

By the Archdeacon of Chester[1]

THE city of Chester, with its ancient walls and ramparts, erected as they were for the protection of the inhabitants, must have experienced many an onslaught, and again and again its citizens must have known what it was to be besieged for a shorter or a longer period. But *the* Siege of Chester—the one, that is, which stands out in history so that it deserves this definite title—is the one that occurred in the time of the Civil War, and which lasted practically for three years, and for one year at least was very close.

Bishop Creighton has told us that "the Civil War wrought greater havoc in Cheshire than in any other part of the country"; and the city of Chester suffered, we may say, more severely than any other place in the county. The city, as Lord Clarendon tells us, "was firm to the King, by the virtue of its inhabitants." Not that quite all were of the same mind, for on August 8, 1642, a determined attempt was made to rouse the disaffected within the city and induce them to enlist themselves on the side of the Parliament. The vigorous action of the Mayor, Thomas Cowper, repressed the movement, and, in fact, gave rise to a vigorous counter-movement and to the raising and equipment of 300 men in the following October in addition to the ordinary *trained band.* A regular and continuous watch was appointed for each of the four city gates, and a levy or assessment made for its maintenance. A little

[1] The writer has got most of the information in this paper from *The History of the Siege of Chester*, published by Broster in 1790.

more than three months later, on February 3, 1643, a further assessment of £500 was made and forthwith collected for the making of fortifications, and for defraying divers charges incident thereunto. When these loyal proceedings were reported to his Majesty, he thought it necessary to send to his faithful citizens at Chester an officer of skill and experience to direct their courage, and appointed Sir Nicholas Byron, a soldier of very good command, as Colonel General of Cheshire and Shropshire and Governor of Chester. He inspired great enthusiasm, and was able, with the encouragement of some gentlemen in North Wales, to raise a considerable body of horse and foot. He also directed the operations with such vigour that the outworks and entrenchments were completed in the summer, giving a further protection outside the walls from Pemberton's Parlour right round to the river. Meanwhile Sir William Brereton, a gentleman of competent fortune in the county, had taken command of the Parliamentary forces, and established himself at Nantwich, which he fortified. From that place he made an attack upon Chester on July 20th, but was driven back with some loss, and proceeded to Flint, joining in the siege of that castle till its surrender upon honourable terms, owing to lack of provisions, was effected. Whilst this siege was proceeding the houses and buildings just outside the entrenchments were cleared away. The King thought it desirable to visit Chester in person; the city being of the greatest importance as the key to Ireland. Accordingly he despatched a courier from Stafford on September 18, 1643, and announced his intention; and five days later, attended by many of the nobility and gentry, approached the city and was received by the civic authorities and the citizens with all loyal devotion. The Mayor delivered the city sword to the King, who graciously returned it, when the Mayor, bare-headed, carried it before his Majesty to the Pentice, where the King was entertained and presented with £200 in gold, and £100 was given to the Prince of Wales. The King's

stay in the city was very brief, and after a few days he departed, having heard from Prince Rupert of the advantage gained by his forces before Worcester. Shortly afterwards Sir William Brereton occupied Hawarden Castle, and from there demanded the surrender of the city of Chester. As a matter of precaution the houses in the intervening suburb of Handbridge and the neighbourhood were destroyed by the authorities of Chester; and eventually Hawarden Castle, which had been invested by the King's forces from Ireland, aided by reinforcements from Chester, capitulated on honourable terms. Meanwhile Beeston Castle, on a commanding position a few miles from the city, had been occupied by the Parliamentarians; but on December 13, 1643, it fell into the hands of the Royalists, who were led by Captain Thomas Sandford, "Captain of Firelocks." A few weeks later the head of the surrendered garrison, Captain Steel, was condemned at Nantwich by his own party and shot as a traitor.

It will be readily understood that the citizens had to put forth supreme efforts to maintain their troops and defend their position. Accordingly we find various resolutions passed at their assemblies with these objects in view. At one of them the Mayor was desired to repair with all speed to Oxford to present a petition to his Majesty in answer to a gracious letter received by him. Payments were ordered and levies made for the reparation of the mud walls as outworks, and for the repair of the city walls and cleaning out of the city ditch, &c. In January 1644 one hundred pounds' worth of the city plate was converted into coin to be used for the defence of the city, whilst a further assessment was levied for the perfecting of the works, and for provisioning the garrison. It was also ordered that £300 should be presented to the King and a like amount to the Prince of Wales. Lord Byron, nephew of the governor, was in command of the Royalist forces; and although he had gained a signal victory near Middlewich in December 1643, he failed a month later in

his siege of Nantwich, and had to make good his retreat to Chester. Early in 1644 the Parliamentarians advanced close to the city and effected a lodgment at Christleton. They were forced to retire; but to prevent danger in the future the suburb of Great Boughton was burnt down by the citizens, so that the enemy might not harbour there.

In March 1644, Prince Maurice arrived in the city, and a form of loyal protestation was drawn up, which was to be submitted "to all the nobility, gentry, divines, citizens, and all other inhabitants of the city." In the summer and autumn of this year the city was more closely surrounded by troops under the command first of Colonel Jones and subsequently of Sir William Brereton himself. Various communications passed between the besiegers and the besieged, in which the former were urged to submit, a course they strenuously refused to adopt. They were, however, in a very confused situation, having nothing but the city wall for their defence. The frequent assessments which had become necessary also caused a good deal of discontent, and it was found expedient to nominate a number of soldiers to collect them. On November 18th, Sir William Brereton demanded the surrender of the city "by trumpet," and to this, after a second letter on the following day, an indignant refusal was rendered. The confusion occasioned by the war led to no Mayor being elected this year. A "faithful well-wisher," by a letter tied to an arrow and shot into the city, endeavoured by insinuating methods to induce the citizens to betray their trust, but without success; though the constant levying of assessments showed strongly the state to which the garrison must have been reduced, and the heavy demands which were made on the loyalty and patriotism of the besieged.

In the early part of 1645, the correspondence between the leaders on both sides was constant. Sir William Brereton, however, seems to have been indisposed to treat with commissioners from the other side for a surrender, which apparently he would only accept on his own terms,

which were set forth in a letter thrown over the walls. In March the advent of Prince Maurice and Prince Rupert into Cheshire caused some diversion of the besieging forces; and in May Sir William Brereton retreated from his position before Chester to Nantwich, and on the 22nd the city was relieved. This movement was no doubt due to the report that the King himself was advancing with a powerful army. He did not, however, at that time come further than Drayton, from which place he marched to Uttoxeter. The city, however, was not left without anxiety, as the outworks may be said to have been still in the possession of the enemy. In September intelligence was received that the King had left Hereford with his forces, and was on his way to Chester. Coming from Chirk Castle, he sent most of his horse over Holt or Farndon Bridge into Cheshire, and himself, with his guards and Lord Gerard and the rest of his troops, entered the city by the old Dee Bridge on September 23rd, and lodged that night at Sir Francis Gamul's, in Lower Bridge Street. It is interesting to know that a portion of this house still remains, though its external appearance has been absolutely changed. It was on the following day that the battle of Rowton Heath, so disastrous to the King's cause, took place. The defeat was in great measure due to misunderstandings, and the fact that the soldiers of the garrison did not know the situation in which Sir Marmaduke Langdale, in command of the Royalist cavalry, was placed. The result of this was that Sir Marmaduke was surrounded and overpowered, and forced to retire towards Chester. Some of his horse were scattered over the country, crossing the river at Boughton Ford, or making for Holt Bridge, whilst those who accompanied him became entangled in the narrow lanes leading to the city, and there was a general rout. The King, attended by Sir Francis Gamul and Alderman Cowper, had the mortification of witnessing the disaster from the leads of the Phœnix Tower, at the north-east angle of the city walls. In this battle many gentlemen and officers of distinction lost their lives,

or were taken prisoners; and it is computed that not less than 600 men were killed on both sides, and amongst the slain was Bernard Stuart, the young, gallant Earl of Lichfield, whilst Sir Philip Musgrave was taken prisoner. On the following day the King, accompanied by Sir Francis Gamul, Captain Thropp, and others, and with 500 horse, marched over Dee Bridge into Wales, and so to Denbigh Castle. Before his departure he gave orders to Lord Byron and his commissioners, "if after ten days they saw no prospect of relief to treat for their own preservation." It will be seen from this that he judged that the city was in great danger, and that it could hardly be expected to hold out much longer.

Sir Francis Gamul and his companions remained with the King for a couple of days, took a sad and final farewell of their Sovereign, and then returned to Chester. They found the city in an even more distressed condition, for the enemy had again forced the works at Boughton, and were close up to the walls, and in possession of the part of the town just outside the Eastgate. For at least a week the daily onslaught of the besieging forces was of the most determined character. They planted their cannon at close quarters, and effected a breach in the walls near the Newgate, and in many parts destroyed the battlements. At night time the damage was repaired as far as was possible. The several assaults of the enemy were met with a stout and stubborn resistance. On October 7th, having surrounded the city with their cavalry, a violent and determined attack was made upon the walls in many parts, which were as resolutely defended. Great courage and determination were exhibited on both sides, and when the assailants in some places gained the top of the walls they were beaten off, thrown down and killed, and the scaling-ladders which they had used were taken possession of. So powerful had this resistance proved to be, that the besiegers gave up their intention of storming the city, and changed their plan into that of a close blockade,

trusting to subdue by famine those whom they were unable to conquer by force.

The position of the city was not improved by the fact that Beeston Castle, after a siege lasting eighteen months, and after great privations suffered by the garrison, at this time had to capitulate to the Parliamentarians. The Governor secured very honourable conditions, he and his men being allowed to march out with horses and arms and with colours flying, a convoy being provided to guard them to Flint Castle. The besieged in Chester had now a very trying time. Their opponents had constructed a floating bridge over the river at Boughton which proved a considerable annoyance to them, whilst affording much help to those who had contrived it. An ineffectual attempt to burn it down was made by turning adrift at high tide two boats filled with combustibles, but though the trains caught fire they were speedily extinguished. A brisk sally out of the city with 500 horse and 200 foot also met with no success. Sir William Brereton again proposed a surrender, but Lord Byron and the commissioners insisted upon terms which he felt he could not grant.

On December 10th, orders were sent by Parliament for the Lancashire forces under Colonel Booth to join Sir William Brereton, and in a few days they arrived, to the consternation of those within the city, which was now quite encompassed, and a scarcity of provisions was soon occasioned. Sir William Brereton, in January 1646, sent again and again a summons to the besieged to surrender, but this was refused nine times, although they had to feed on horses, dogs, and cats, and boiled wheat, as the hope was entertained that the King might still be able to come to their relief. It was only when all chance of this had vanished that a treaty was agreed upon, and a large number of commissioners on each side were appointed to draw up the terms of it. Accordingly "Articles of Surrender," seventeen in number, were devised and agreed to, and signed on February 3, 1646. It is a singular

coincidence that this day happened to be, in former times, the Feast of St. Werburgh, who might be called the patron saint of the city. These Articles of Surrender are very interesting, and may be accounted very generous. In them "liberty to march out of the city, castle, and fort with all their apparel whatsoever and no other" was granted to all, the amount of money which each should carry being fixed, and ranging from forty pounds in money and twenty pounds in plate for Lord and Lady Byron to twenty shillings for lieutenants, cornets, ensigns, and other inferior officers in commission; arrangements were made for the protection of women and prisoners and for the prevention of pillage and plunder; no church within the city, or evidence or writing belonging to the same, was to be defaced; those who marched out of the town had liberty to march to Conway, and facilities were granted to them for this purpose; "the friends of the Earls of Derby and Lichfield, or any of those whose dead bodies were not yet interred in the city, had two months' time given them to fetch them from thence whither they pleased, provided they came attended by not more than twenty horse"; and hostages were to be given for the due performance of the said Articles.

Thus, after a sturdy resistance of three years and a half, the city was taken, after proving its unflinching loyalty to the King and his cause. In this respect Chester stands out in a remarkable manner, and may be said to vie with Oxford in its devotion to Charles I. The damage inflicted on it was immense, and a very moderate calculation has estimated it at £200,000. Randle Holme has given an interesting description of the damage done, mentioning many specific instances, and ending with this: "This may be an advertisement to us that God's mercy is yet to be found, since he hath left so many streets, lanes, and churches unmolested. God grant us faith, patience, and true repentance and amendment, that a worse danger befall us not. Amen." The same writer, alluding to the

attack on September 29, 1645, says: "By this time our women are all on fire, striving through a gallant emulation to out-do our men, and will make good our yielding walls or lose their lives to show they dare attempt it. The work goes forward, and they, like so many Amazons, do outface death, and dare danger though it lurks in every basket; seven are shot and three slain, yet they scorn to leave their matchless undertaking, and thus they continued for ten days' space, possessing the beholders that they are immaculate!" It will be seen from this contemporary description that the annals of the period, if fully chronicled, would afford a wonderful story of bravery and endurance and patience, and would add lustre to the fame of the ancient city of Chester. Even this imperfect sketch may not be out of place, but may lead us to admire the chivalry and loyalty and courage of those brave defenders of our walls in bygone days.

Sir William Brereton's forces were not very particular as to the observance of the treaty. The sword and mace were indeed restored to the city, but much injury was done to the Cathedral, where the choir was defaced, the organ damaged, the stained-glass windows broken, and the font demolished. The High Cross was also taken down, and the fonts taken out of several of the parish churches, in which also many of the ancient monuments were destroyed. As a result, very few of the latter of an early date are found now in Chester. The Gamul and Oldfield monuments in the Church of St. Mary on the Hill were preserved by a special agreement with Sir William Brereton. The Church of St. John suffered much, as it was so long in the possession of the enemy, being without the city walls. No doubt in other respects the terms of the "Articles of Surrender" were violated.

The following fuller descriptions of the visit of the King will not be out of place as an appendix to this paper. I am indebted for them to the Rev. Canon Morris, D.D., F.S.A., who had supplied them for another purpose.

"From the account in Harleian 2155, &c., it would appear that the citizens were surprised when active operations were resumed on September 20, 1645. A force detached from the troops besieging Beeston Castle, and consisting of 500 horse, 200 dragoons, and 700 foot, advanced stealthily by ways through the country in the dead of the night, and at daybreak proceeded to storm the suburbs. Seizing, with little loss (either by treachery or through the negligence of the garrison), a mount near Deeside at Boughton, they set upon the main line of defences, and captured all the mounds on that side of the city. Then forcing their way through the Bars into Foregate Street, they obtained possession of the north-western suburb up to the Eastgate, taking as a trophy and a 'token of good presage,' the city sword and mace, which was probably in the Mayor's house in St. John's Ward, afterwards occupied by Sir W. Brereton as his headquarters. This success encouraged the Parliamentarians to hope that with a special effort the siege of Chester might be brought to a rapid close, and the authorities in London despatched urgent messages to the neighbouring counties calling for immediate reinforcements. Chester was regarded as a place of very great consequence (especially by Parliamentarians), both for the reducing and settling of all North Wales, and for the preventing of the landing of any Irish supplies. The citizens were equally active in taking precautions against the expected assaults in force. The East Gate was rammed up with earth. The houses in Cow Lane, St. John's Lane, and St. Thomas' Street (on the Boughton side) were burnt to deprive the enemy of shelter. Occasional sallies were made with indifferent success, and marksmen on the walls and towers were keeping up a continual fire. The besiegers were equally busy on their side. From the steeple of St. John's Church they had an excellent position for annoying the citizens, and on Monday, September 22, a large breach was made by their artillery in the walls near the New Gate, sufficient to admit ten men abreast. Vigorous attempts were made to make good this breach with beds and wool-packs.

They were ordered to carry the beds, &c., one half to St. Bridget's; and, after a sharp fight, at eight in the evening the enemy were beaten back with considerable loss by the courageous defence of the Chirk Castle troop. A simultaneous attempt was

made by another body to scale the walls on the east between the Sadler's Tower and the East Gate, but they were beaten off with much loss.

"King Charles at this time was on his way from Hereford, intending to pass through Lancashire and Cumberland into Scotland. On receiving information of the critical position at Chester he marched at once for the city, which he entered with some hazard, at Handbridge, on Tuesday, September 23, attended by Lord Lichfield, Lord Gerard, and a small bodyguard. The King lodged that night at Sir Francis Gamul's house in Bridge Street. The remainder of the King's troops under Sir Marmaduke Langdale marched on towards Holt, and, crossing the Dee by the bridge, took up a position on Rowton Heath, about two miles from Chester. Here, early in the morning, he encountered General Poyntz, who had been ordered by the Parliament Committee to follow the King and prevent him from relieving Chester. Although his horse was tired with the long march overnight, Langdale succeeded in beating back Poyntz with considerable loss. He at once sent by Col. Shakerley to inform the King that he had obeyed his orders in checking Poyntz's advance, and to ask for further orders. The Colonel executed his orders with better speed than could be expected, for he galloped directly to the river Dee under Huntingdon House, got a wooden tub (used for slaughtering swine) and a batting staff (used for batting of coarse linen) for an oar, put a servant into the tub with him, and in this desperate manner swam over the river, his horse swimming by him (for the banks there were very steep and the river very deep), ordered his servant to stay there with the tub for his return, and was with the King in little more than a quarter of one hour after he left Sir Marmaduke. This expeditious method saved him going the nine or ten miles about by Holt Bridge.

"This speedy transmission of intelligence did not save the situation. Although preparations were made early in the day for a sally, and the citizens were busy clearing out the dung that barred up the gate which led to the suburbs, such delays were made by some about the King, that no orders were sent, nor any sally made out of the city by the King's party till past three o'clock in the afternoon, which was full six hours after

Poyntz had been beaten back. Through some misunderstanding Lord Gerard ordered Langdale to draw nearer Chester, where some foot would be ready to support him. This was impracticable, as Sir Marmaduke would then have been open to attack in rear as well as in front. For Poyntz had now had time to rally his forces, and, in obedience to his message, was reinforced about noon by 500 horse and 300 foot under Col. Jones, the Adjutant General, drawn hurriedly from the force besieging Chester. This hasty march of the Parliamentarians was mistaken for flight, and a considerable portion of the garrison with Lord Gerard and Lord Lichfield were ordered to pursue, passing through the North Gate round by Flookersbrook, as the direct way by the East Gate had been blocked up. Before they could learn their mistake Poyntz fell upon Langdale, who was thus compelled to meet his assault in front, as well as Col. Jones' attack in rear, and notwithstanding a gallant resistance he was routed, and forced to retire in the direction of Hoole Heath. Here the Royalist horse became disordered, and the narrow lanes and passes between there and Chester so crowded, that they were unable to make an effectual stand, and, in fact, threw their supporters under Lord Gerard into immediate confusion. Some made for Holt Bridge, others crossed the river at Dee-fords, and so into the city; but Poyntz, satisfied with his success, made no attempt to pursue them. No less than 600 men fell in this battle, amongst them several of high rank and distinction: more than 800 prisoners were taken. Amongst the slain was Bertie Stuart, the young Earl of Lichfield. The King, attended by the Mayor, Sir Francis Gamul, and Alderman Cowper, had the unhappiness of watching this disaster, first from the Phœnix Tower, and afterwards from the Cathedral Tower, where, as he was talking with a captain, a bullet from St. John's gave him a salute, narrowly missing the King, hit the said captain on the head, and killed him on the spot. Owing to this disaster, it was not thought advisable that the King should remain in Chester. Before his departure he called the Mayor and leading citizens together, and desired them, if he was unable to send them the aid he expected within eight or ten days, to make the best terms of surrender they could. Instead of pursuing his route to Scotland, he returned into Wales, passing over Dee

Bridge between nine and ten in the morning, accompanied by Sir F. Gamul, Capt. Thorpe, and Alderman Cowper. After staying three hours at Hawarden Castle, he reached Denbigh Castle the same night."

FROM SLINGSBY'S DIARY.

"By ye wayes we took through ye almost inaccessible mountains of Wales, y^{t} we heard no more of Poyntz, nor did he trouble us much till we got to Chester; and though he troubled us not, yet found we both loss and trouble in our passage: loss in our horses, many of y^{m} tireing so, y^{t} ye Troopers were fain to forsake y^{m}. In our Quarters we had little accommodation, but of all ye places we came to ye best at Old Radnor, where ye King lay in a poor low chamber, and my Lord of Linsey and others by ye Kitching fire on hay: no better were we accommodated for victuals: which makes me remember this passage; while ye King was at his supper eating a pullet and a piece of cheese, ye room without was full but ye men's stomachs empty for want of meat. Ye good wife troubled wth continual calling upon her for victuals, and having it seems but ye one cheese, comes into ye room where ye King was, and very soberly asks if ye King had done with ye cheese for ye gentlemen wthout desired it. But ye best was we never tarried long in any place, & therefore might we more willingly endure one night's hardship in hopes that ye next might be better. And thus we continued our march until we came to Chester, when we found my Lord Byron in command in ye town & ye enemy in ye suburbs, and so close y^{t} it was some hazard to ye King to pass ye bridge. Now, our horse quartered about 3 miles off, except only ye King's life-guard and my Lord Garrard's (Charles Gerard, created Ld Gerard Nov. 8 this year) horse, both w^{h} were drawn into ye town, & preparations made ye next day to have a sally, but while they were busy to carry out ye dung that barricaded up ye gate y^{t} led to ye suburbs a messenger came y^{t} brought ye King's word y^{t} Poyntz had engaged Sir Marmaduke Langdale to fight, & a little after we heard y^{t} we had taken some colours of ye enemy's, but y^{t} ye King must send supplys, by reason y^{t} ye enemy increased by that assistance they had from neighbouring garrisons which flocked to them. Whereupon ye King sent forth both Lord Lichfield and Lord Gerard with those that were in ye town, but before they could joyne our horse were beaten, and in ye view of ye town & of ye King, who at ye very same time was in one of ye towers of ye Walls, looking over to see our men & theirs in ye suburbs exchanging some bullets one with another. We took it first for ye enemy till some came wounded & brought in ye sad news y^{t} our horse was routed, many taken, and my Lord Lichfield slain.

"Here I do wonder at ye admirable temper of ye King, whose constancy was such y^{t} no perils never so unavoidable could move him to astonishment, but y^{t} still he set ye same face & settled countenance upon what adverse fortune soever befell him, & neither was exalted in prosperity nor dejected in adversity; w^{h} was ye more admirable in him, seeing he had no other to

have recourse unto for counsel & assistance, but must bear ye whole burden upon his shoulder. By this accident I never found him moved at all, though the loss was so much & greater by my Lord of Lichfield's death, his kinsman, & whom he loved so dearly. But this makes him look nearer for his own safety, & therefore gives order for his march ye next day with those horse y^t^ came safe to ye town; which he left without all hopes of relief to make conditions for themselves for the town if they durst attempt no more. We marched over ye bridge in ye day, having set up some blinds if they might not take notice so easily when ye King passed over, & except one horse that was killed, I think no others took any harm. From hence we marched on to Denbigh Castle, and after that to Ruthin, till at last by unknown ways and passages, with many dark & late marches, we arrived at ye garrison of Newark about ye 14th of October."

The above contemporary accounts will enable us to realise both the gravity of the situation in the city, and the difficulties which beset the Royalist troops in their journeys through the country.

CHESHIRE AND ITS FAMILIES

By James Hall

Author of "A History of Nantwich," "The Civil War in Cheshire," &c.

CHESHIRE, in regard to its shape, has been said to resemble a bird's wing, an axe-head, and a shoulder of mutton. The late Colonel Egerton Legh humorously compared it to a chicken with its head in Featherbed Moss, Macclesfield in its crop, and the tail formed by Wirral. Perhaps more seriously, but no less fancifully, it may be likened to a broad, ear-topped shield of the College of Arms type, divided palewise by a central line of hills, of which the isolated rocks of Halton and Beeston occupy respectively the chief point and the fesse point of the shield.

From the summit of Beeston Castle, or, better still, from the more elevated escarpment of the adjacent Peckforton Hill, marked on the survey map *Stanner Nab*—a name little altered from its original Saxon, *Stan-es Nebb*, literally "front of stone," or stone head, and now commonly called *Tanner's Nob*—nearly the whole county is spread out in fine panorama of plain; the view extending from the Wirral coast to the high moorlands of Macclesfield, a distance of about fifty miles; and from the Mersey to the Shropshire border, a little over thirty miles. A like distant and picturesque horizon is obtainable from eminences such as Alderley Edge, Cloud End, and Mow Cop on the east; Frodsham Hill, Helsby Tor, and Halton Castle on the north; Carden Cliff, Harthill, and Belvidere in Wirswall on the south border. From gentle uplands, the more

circumscribed landscape presents the effect of a tree-covered plain, owing to the great quantity of hedgerow timber, chiefly oak, and the smallness of the fields. This illusion is perfect when the view is taken from the cupola on the roof of Doddington Hall; but in reality the county is almost destitute of woods, excepting spinnies, often hidden in dingles, and the rather modern plantations on the central hills. There are, however, extensive parks at Dunham, Tatton, Tabley, Arley, Lyme, Peover, Somerford, Oulton, Vale Royal, Eaton, Cholmondeley, Combermere, Doddington, and Crewe; although some mentioned in history have been disparked, as at Kermincham and Norbury Booths.

Cheshire is a county of large estates, many of which have descended by a long ancestry to the present owners. The greatest estates occur in the purely agricultural and sparsely populated districts of the south. In order of their extent comes first the Peckforten estate, 25,380 acres (Lord Tollemache); next Cholmondeley, 16,842 acres (the Marquis of Cholmondeley); then Eaton, 15,001 acres (the Duke of Westminster); Doddington, 13,832 acres (Sir Delves L. Broughton, Bart.); and Crewe, 10,148 acres (Earl Crewe); but this last estate does not include the railway town of that name. Other large landowners[1] (most of whose names are historic in the county, and whose estates vary between 5000 and 10,000 acres) are—

The LORDS—Egerton of Tatton, Harrington, Stamford, Derby, Haddington, De Tabley, Delamere, Stanley of Alderley (Sheffield), Kilmorrey, Shrewsbury, and Combermere. Also Sir Philip Grey-Egerton, Mr. Legh [now Lord Newton] of Lyme, Mr. Legh of Adlington, Mr Egerton-Warburton of Arley, Sir W. G. Shakerley, Mr. Bromley Davenport, and Colonel France Hayhurst.

These twenty-three gentlemen own collectively 203,533

[1] This list of names is taken from the published returns to the House of Commons of the "Owners of Land" throughout the United Kingdom, commonly called the *Modern Domesday Book*, of 1873.

acres, or a little over one-third of the whole county; but, according to the same authority, 2840 persons own lands varying from 10 to 1000 acres, also 3166 persons have holdings between one acre and ten acres, while 17,691 persons possess lands less than one acre in extent. The Crown lands amount to 3581 acres, and the commons or waste lands to 6704 acres, so that the total number of owners in Cheshire is 23,720, the total area of the county being 608,922 acres, or rather less than 1000 square miles.

Some houses of the gentry have from ancient times stood on the margin of a natural mere, as at Tatton, Tabley, Mere, Rostherne, Arley, Combermere, and Marbury; or beside an artificial pool, as at Crewe and Doddington. But Bagmere, which once reflected the stately mansion of the Breretons, has been drained, and Ridley Pool has long been "sown and mown," in fulfilment, as credulous people have believed, of Nixon's prophecy. Barmere is one of the few meres that have not been honoured by a gentleman's seat.

Of modern mansions, both the magnificent palace at Eaton and the castle at Cholmondeley stand near ornamental sheets of water; while Peckforten Castle, perhaps the most remarkable house in all England, being built in close imitation of a Norman castle, is perched on a rocky eminence like an eyrie.

In no part of Cheshire are so many gentlemen's seats clustered together as within a radius of a few miles around the old-fashioned town of Knutsford. They are as follows:—

Dunham Hall, or Dunham Massey, as it was named in ancient times, when it was held as a feudal barony by the Massey family until the death of Hamon, about the year 1340, stands in what is known as the Old Park, which is walled round for the protection of about a hundred head of deer. The so-called New Park, nearly three miles in circumference, also contains aged oaks and beeches, and is divided from the other park merely by the road leading from Bowdon to Dunham village. From the

Masseys the estate descended to the notable family of Booth. At the old mansion lived Sir John Booth, who was slain at Flodden Field; Sir George Booth, created Baron Delamere in 1661 in honour of his staunch royalist services to Charles I.; and his son Henry, second lord, who, after having been three times unjustly imprisoned in the Tower, was in 1686 tried for high treason by his peers and acquitted.

High Leigh.—Here two important mansions stood in close proximity, namely, East Hall and West Hall. The latter, or what remains of it, was changed into a farm-house nearly a century ago. The former, rebuilt towards the end of the eighteenth century as a brick mansion, is still the residence of the Legh family, which has been seated there since the time of Edward I. In the reign of Henry VII. there was much litigation between the Leghs of the two halls.

Rostherne Hall, long the residence of the Masseys of Coddington, and now the property of Lord Egerton, stands on the border of a broad mere, as much famed for its curious legends as for the natural beauty of its surroundings.

Ashley Hall, where, in 1715, ten Cheshire gentlemen, namely, Thomas Assheton, the resident proprietor; Sir Richard Grosvenor, of Eaton; James, Earl Barrymore, of Marbury; Charles Hurleston, of Newton; Amos Meredith, of Henbury; Alexander Radclyff, of Fox Denton in Lancashire, but born at Wythenshaw in Cheshire in 1677; Robert Cholmondeley, of Holford; John Warren, of Poynton; Henry Legh, of Legh; and Peter Legh, of Lyme; met to discuss the propriety of espousing the cause of the Old Pretender, the Chevalier St. George, the decision arrived at being in the negative by the casting vote of the owner of Ashley.

Tatton Hall, anciently the seat of the knightly family of Massey, from the time of Edward I. to the time of Henry VI., descended in the time of Charles II. to the Egerton family,

and is now owned by Lord Egerton. The present mansion, designed by the two Wyatts, has for its chief external feature a portico of columns 25 feet high, and stands in the centre of a park nearly 12 miles in circumference. The old hall, half a mile away, is situate on low, sheltered ground at the north end of the lake.

Mere Hall.—The old hall, long the residence of the ancient family of Mere, stood nearer the village, but only a portion of it now remains, used as a farmhouse. This estate has been in the possession of the Brooke family since 1652. Mr. Peter Langford Brooke, who, in 1834, built the present brick mansion overlooking the mere, had the misfortune to be drowned while skating on the mere on 9th January 1840, his wife witnessing the sad occurrence.

Arley Hall, the seat of the Warburton family for several centuries, was demolished in 1833, and the present handsome structure, with its chapel designed by Salvin (who was also the architect of Peckforton Castle), was not completed until 1845. Over the stone porch doorway is carved the following rhyme by the squire of the hall :—

> "This Gate is free to all Good Men and True,
> Right Welcome thou, if worthy to pass through."

Marbury Hall,[1] possessed by the Marbury family for many generations until the death of Richard Marbury in 1684. Since the eighteenth century it has belonged to the family of Barry. The present mansion, overlooking Budworth Mere, was built by the architect, Mr. A. Salvin, in the French château style.

Tabley Hall, which resembles Tatton in architecture, was completed in the year 1769. The old hall, now in a ruinous condition, and in danger of becoming a tumbled heap by its thick mantling of ivy, together with a detached

[1] On the southern border of the county is another *Marbury Hall*, late the residence of Cudworth H. Poole, Esq., beautifully situated on a hill that commands the view of two meres and a picturesque church and village of the same name.

TABLEY HOUSE AND CHAPEL.

HAMMERSMITH
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brick chapel dated 1675, stand on an island in the circling mere. This was the home of Sir Peter Leycester, the representative of a long lineage, and the first great historian of Cheshire families, who was buried at Budworth in 1678.

The above-mentioned halls lie on the northern and western sides of Knutsford; two others are on the south side of that town, namely:—

Toft Hall, another seat of the Leycester family for many generations, and remarkable now for its fine avenue of elms in triple rows. Ralph Leycester, who died in 1777, owned this estate for no fewer than 70 years.

Peover Hall is associated with the Mainwarings from Plantagenet times, whose surname, according to the antiquary Dugdale, had undergone 131 variations of spellings in old deeds. Sir Henry Mainwaring, who died unmarried on 6th April 1797, was the last direct descendant. By his will the estate came to his uterine half-brother, Thomas Wettenhall, of Nantwich, who took the name and arms of Mainwaring, and, dying the following year, on 12th July 1798, thus became the ancestor of the present line of baronets of Peover.

Farther away from Knutsford, on the borders of Delamere Forest, stand three notable houses; namely, *Delamere House*, designed by Wyatt, and owned by Mr. Wilbraham, who is the direct descendant of the ancient family of Wilbraham of Woodhey in the south part of the county; *Vale Royal*, the seat of the present Lord Delamere, that estate having been purchased in 1615 by the noble lady, Mary Cholmondeley, widow of Sir Hugh Cholmondeley, and known in history as "the bold lady of Cheshire," who entertained King James I. on his progress through the county in 1617; and *Utkinton Hall*, now a farmhouse with some remains of its former importance, which in the same year, 1617, was the residence of the forester, Sir John Done, who had married Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey, whose manners and character

were "so amiable that to this day" (as Thomas Pennant says in 1782), "when a Cheshire man would express some excellency in one of the fair sex, he would say, 'There is a Lady Done for you!'"

Very fine specimens of ancient timber houses are at Bramhall, Little Moreton, Adlington; and the hall at Baguley, perhaps the oldest building of its kind in the county, has massive oak beams, still in good condition, proving the durability of that material for building construction. Of stone and brick mansions, Brereton is the best example of Tudor architecture; Dorfold and Crewe of the seventeenth century renaissance; Oulton, Lyme, and Doddington of the later palladian style.

Other halls constructed wholly or in part of timber, and once occupied by the yeomen class—the charterers or freeholders named on old manor court-rolls—whose estates have been swallowed up in the larger properties, were usually defended by deeply-dug, rectangular moats, indicative of an unsettled and dangerous state of life in former times. At Huxley Old Hall, at Harden, at Moreton, and elsewhere, moats and draw-bridges still exist; but some moated enclosures have been turned into orchards, and a farmhouse has been built outside, as at Mickley in Wrenbury parish, and at Stapeley in Wybunbury parish.

Formerly Cheshire people frequently married with neighbouring families of like station in life, according to their common proverb, "It is better to marry over the mixen than over the moor;" and even yet there is a saying: "If you are going into Cheshire, remember they are all cousins."

The long-established peasant families must not be passed over in silence. Suspicious of strangers, they understand "the law of the land" very differently from the inhabitants of crowded cities and manufacturing towns. Country people still speak with confidence and respect of "our squire," just as the landlords talk of "our people";

although it must be admitted that the mutual social influences of old English life are now fast waning. A former manifestation of goodwill and good understanding among the tenantry of a large estate may here be mentioned. On the death of the Rev. Sir Thomas Broughton, Bart., in July 1813, the coffin containing his remains was borne to burial on the shoulders of relays of farmers by road from Doddington Hall to Broughton Church, a distance of no less than twelve miles!

The numerous townships into which Cheshire is divided are almost entirely rural in their situation; and in few parts of the county, Wirral being the chief exception, are the dwellings sufficiently near each other to constitute what is generally known as a village. I have heard a countryman express this peculiarity in these words: "The common people live in the lanes, but the quality (that is, the well-to-do farmers) live up in the fields."

With regard to Cheshire families in the dim past, Camden the antiquary of the sixteenth century wrote:[1] "Cheshire is the great nursing-mother of the gentry; for there is no other English county that formerly supplied the King's army with more nobility, or that could number more knightly families."

Contemporary with Camden, John Speed, the historian, a native of the county, calls Cheshire the "seed-plot of gentility." In proof of this, we refer to the statement already made in the historical introduction to this volume, that William the Conqueror constituted Cheshire a county palatine, bestowing the earldom on his nephew, Hugh Lupus, whose title, Earl of Chester, has belonged, since the time of Edward I., by hereditary right to the heir-apparent of the English Crown. Cheshire, like Normandy in France, thus became an *imperium in imperio*, with the Earl as titular sovereign and courts of justice, administered by a

[1] The original words in the *Britannia* read: "Cestria eximia nobilitatis altrix; nec enim alia est in Anglia provincia, quæ plures nobiles in aciem eduxerit, et plures equestres familias numerarit."

Constable, Seneschall, Chamberlain, Justices, Barons of Exchequer, Sheriff, Attorney, Escheator, &c. So constituted, the county preserved its independent existence until the time of Henry VIII., when it became subject to the Crown; and in the next reign the county sent its first representatives to the national Parliament at Westminster. The first Earl held a large part of the earldom in his own hands; and portioned out the rest of the land among military men, whom he created barons, or tenants *in capite;* and their hereditary honorary services for their fees were due to him and his successors. In course of time these fees became a civil establishment rather than a military plan, and the services began to be compounded. Agricultural and other services grew out of the sub-infeudations of the chief tenants; and eventually, by a statute, 12 Chas. II., local baronies and manors became little more than nominal institutions, and as such they continue to be.

It is said the Grosvenors are descended from Gilbert le Grosvenor, who came over from Normandy with Hugh Lupus, his uncle; the Mainwarings from Earl Randle; and the Egertons and Cholmondeleys from the Norman Barons of Malpas. The ancient, but now extinct, families of Merbury, Hatton, Rutter, Birkenhead, Vernon, Leftwich, and Fitton, each bore three *garbs or* (three golden wheat-sheaves) on their shields, an honourable charge claimed to have been assigned them by the sixth Earl, Randle Blundeville, who bore the same device. In modern times the *garb or* occurs on the arms of Wicksted, Cholmondeley, and Grosvenor; and, in the last named, since the time of Richard II., when Sir Robert Grosvenor contended with the proud Sir Richard Scrope of Yorkshire in the long heraldic suit (1386–1389) as to the right to bear *Azure a bend or*, with the result that Sir Robert should bear a golden sheaf instead of a golden band, as descended from the Earls of Chester.

In the ancient days of chivalry the military aristocracy promoted peace and order within the county, and defended

it against raids from beyond the Welsh Marshes. Cheshire archers became famous; and, led by their own knights, gained renown in the wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

If military achievement be claimed in justification of the proverb—"Cheshire, chief of men"—quoted by Drayton, it must be remembered there was a rival in the field. The "Men of Kent," who boldly said to William the Conqueror—

> "We are ready to offer thee either Peace or War at thy own choice and election—Peace with faithful obedience, if thou wilt permit us to enjoy our liberties; War, and that most deadly, if thou deny it"—

have a prior claim for daring manhood. But while Grose, the antiquary, insinuated that the proverb was given to our noble selves *by* our noble selves, it may, after all, have had no more serious signification than that Cheshire men always boasted of their isolation from other English people.

Truly the warrior-roll forms a long list of brave and hardy men, from Roger Lacy, the Constable of Cheshire in 1200, that magnanimous champion of war in both France and Wales, down to Field-Marshal Combermere of Salamanca and Bhurtpore fame; but memorials abound of heroic endeavour in the arts of peace, in law and letters, as well as in the field.

Of famous lawyers were Lord Chancellor Egerton and Sir Ranulph Crewe, the Speaker of the House of Commons, in the seventeenth century. In the following century were Randle Wilbraham, ancestor of the Wilbrahams of Rode, and of Lathom House (now Lord Skelmersdale) in Lancashire; Sir John Chesshyre, who founded in 1733 a library at Halton, and was buried at Runcorn in 1738 with this epitaph:—

> "An honest man's the noblest work of God";

and Richard P. Arden, born at Stockport in 1745, who became Lord Chief Justice, Baron Alvanley, and died in 1804.

Of talented men of letters were Dr. Broome, the poet, born at Haslington in 1689; and in our own time Lord de Tabley, eminent as poet, botanist, and author of the first work on the subject of book-plates; Sir Philip Egerton, the learned geologist and mineralogist; the Rev. A. P. Stanley, Dean of Westminster; and other worthies whose names are enshrined in the volumes of the *National Biographical Dictionary*.

Of benefactors of their fellow-men were James Neild, born at Knutsford in 1774, the philanthropic prison-visitor; the Duke of Bridgewater, pioneer of canal construction; George Wilbraham, Esq., of Delamere House, who died in 1813, and was one of the first to introduce an improved system of agriculture into the county; the first Lord Tollemache, who in his lifetime was everywhere spoken of as Cheshire's model landlord; and many others who, holding positions of trust for the general good, fulfilled their duties with integrity and honour, and to whom we are all debtors.

There is another local proverb, expressed in curious rhyme and alliteration, that relates to the number and distribution of four Cheshire family names:—

> As many Leighs as fleas; Massies as asses;
> Crewes as crows; and Davenports as dogs' tails.

This is easy of explanation when multitudinous plebeians bearing the same surnames are added to the following lists of genteel families:—

There were *Leghs* of Legh, Northwood, Sandbach, Booths, Oughtrington, Adlington, Baguley, Lyme, and Ridge.

There were *Masseys* of Massey, Coddington, Puddington, Tatton, and Chester.

There were *Crewes* of Crewe, Nantwich, Alvaston, Farndon, Holt, Cholmondeston, and Utkinton.

There were *Davenports* of Davenport, Woodford, Calveley, Wheltrough, Bramhall, Henbury, Capesthorne, Blackhurst, Boughton, and Chorley.

The Davenport family had power of life and death over intruders infesting the royal forest of Macclesfield; and their crest—a rogue's head, with a halter round the neck—must have been a constant reminder that the Davenports were terrors to all evil-doers.

The Bramhall Davenports, who held that estate for more than five hundred years, have persistently borne the name of William; and for the same length of time the Tattons of Wythenshawe have been named Robert and William alternately; while the owner of Carden has been John Leche for sixteen successive generations!

In regard to curiosities of descent, it may here be restated that Robert Hyde, of Hyde, Esq., who died about the year 1528, left a son, Lawrence Hyde, who, leaving Cheshire for Wiltshire, became the ancestor of the Hydes of Westhatch, from whom descended the celebrated Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, whose two granddaughters, Mary and Anne, became in succession Queens of England.

Few counties in England have had their history so fully written and re-written as Cheshire; and therefore from this epitome of a wide-embracing subject the reader is referred to the writings of Camden, Webb, Fuller, Sir Peter Leycester, the Lysons, and the monumental volumes of Dr. Ormerod's *History of Cheshire;* to the published transactions of the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, and of the historic societies of Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester; to many separate histories of towns and parishes in the county; and to the genealogical works of the late Mr. Earwaker, whose untimely death in 1895 is still deplored by all who take an interest in the records of family history.

This chapter shall close with the words of two Cheshire poets—the one Geoffrey Whitney, who, living in Queen Elizabeth's reign, wrote in praise of prominent Cheshire men of that time; the other, the late Rowland Eyles Egerton-Warburton, "the rhyming squire of Arley," in the time of Queen Victoria.

Whitney, in his *Emblem*, dedicated to "I. I. esquier," says :—

> Not for our selues alone wee are create,
> But for our frendes, and for our countries good.

Mr. Egerton-Warburton composed these verse-mottoes for the shields that decorate the two fireplaces in the dining-room at Arley Hall.

Under the Egerton shield :—

> Since days of olden chivalry bequeathed from sire to son,
> May honour keep untarnished still the shield which valour won.

Under the Warburton shield :—

> If proud thou be of ancestors for worth and wisdom famed,
> So live that they, if now alive, would not of thee be shamed.

SOME CHESHIRE CROSSES

By the Archdeacon of Chester

IT would be impossible, in the course of a short chapter, to give an adequate account of all the crosses in the county of which remains still exist. On such a subject, as in the case of most counties, a volume might be written. Nor will it be attempted even to refer to all of them or to give a complete list, and it may well be that some interesting specimens will be omitted, or not mentioned here, not because they are not worthy of mention, but because there is not space to do justice to them.

It cannot but be a matter of regret that Puritan fanaticism was responsible for the destruction of many, if not most, of these crosses throughout the country. It has been computed that at least 5000 had been at various times erected, and they afforded not only types of architectural design and ornament, but also historical evidence of former times and customs.

The crosses varied much in form and character, as also in position and origin. Many of them, no doubt, were in the first instance *Preaching Crosses*. The monks or other early heralds of Christianity would rear up some simple or wooden cross to mark the place from which they would address the people who came to hear them, and this would in process of time give place to a more permanent structure of stone, sometimes of an elaborate nature. Generally it would be elevated or raised upon a platform of steps, sometimes few, but sometimes as many as eight or more. The cross itself might be enriched with the Figure or with

some inscription or pattern of some emblematic kind. After a time, in some places, a church would be erected, and the cross or its successor would become the *Churchyard Cross*. Where this did not happen, the cross would remain as a reminder to the people of the message that had been delivered there, and to teach them that all their actions were to have a religious purpose. In some instances the cross became a *Market Cross*, of which, in different parts of the country, we have various elaborate specimens. Here again the name, whether the form of the cross was prominent or not, was evidently meant to suggest that the transactions there carried on were to be true and just, as became Christian men. Sometimes the cross became "*the High Cross*," where justice was administered and civic matters discussed; and in this case also the title is most suggestive. In addition to these there were *Boundary Crosses*, by which would be implied the sin of removing a neighbour's landmark; and *Weeping Crosses*, visited by penitents. Of all these, except, so far as I know, the latter, there are, of course, many examples in the county, and of some of them this article will treat.

First and foremost, it is a matter of great regret that the *High Cross* has disappeared from its position in the city of Chester. It has indeed left its name behind it, the junction of the four principal streets in the centre of the city being still known as *The Cross*, and being so named not from the fact of the cross-roads being there, but from the structure which once stood on the spot. This was a tall shaft with canopied head, on which were carved two rows of figures in niches, and on the top an orb surmounted by a cross. The civic buildings were close at hand, being built on to St. Peter's Church, and being styled *The Pentice*, probably from pent-house, as indicating the way in which it was built on to the church. Though the offices of the municipality have long since been moved to the Town Hall, the old name is still preserved, one of the courts over which the Recorder presides being called in documents "The Pentice

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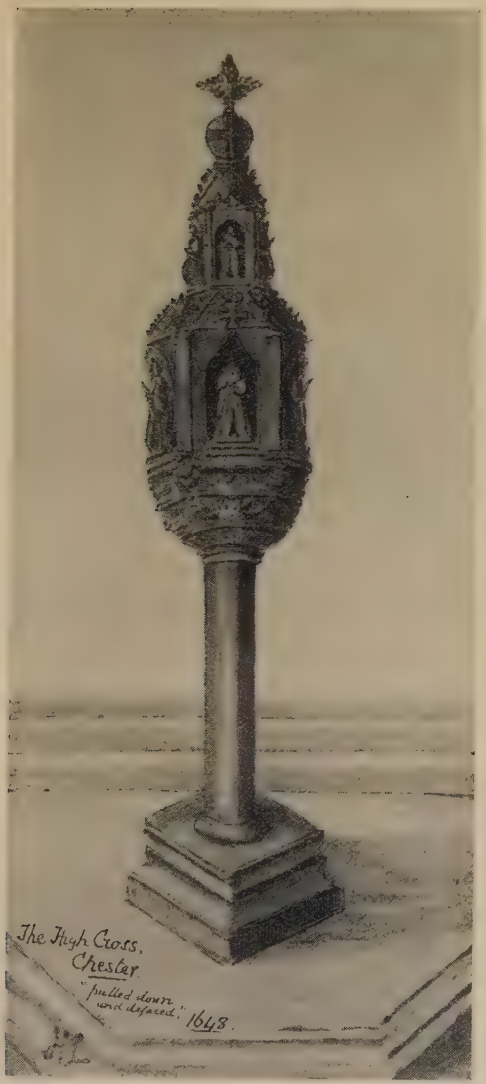

THE HIGH CROSS, CHESTER.

Court." The *High Cross* was taken down in 1646, when the Parliamentarians entered the city, the other crosses having been destroyed in 1577 or earlier. It was removed to Netherleigh House in the outskirts of the city, then the home of the Cotgreaves. What is said to be the head of it is now in the Grosvenor Museum at Chester, but the carvings have been cut away, as it is quite plain; and the shaft is said to be in the grounds of Plas Newydd at Llangollen. The suggestion has been made that the cross might he restored, and though it could not be placed again on its old site, owing to the confined space and the exigencies of traffic, it might find a position of importance in some other part of the city. The *High Cross* was the scene of all great civic functions. Here, again and again, royalty was received and conducted into the adjacent Pentice and entertained. Here proclamations were read out with due formality, and here the Mystery Plays were represented, the first performance having taken place at the Abbey Gate before the Abbot and his brethren. The cross would thus be associated in the minds of the citizens with much of their civic life, and many noteworthy events in their history, and for this reason, if for no other, its removal is much to be regretted.

Reference has already been made to the destruction of crosses in 1577 in and about Chester. In that year Sheriff Mutton seems to have distinguished himself in this work, as we read that he pulled down certain crosses by a commission from the Archbishop's visitors. Some probably had disappeared at an earlier date, for in 1543 the city mason was paid two days' wages "for shiftyinge the cross" at St. Mary's-on-the-Hill. No doubt at this period many of the churchyard crosses in the county, as well as in the city, were demolished. This was often done by shortening the shaft, thus taking away the cross itself, and using the portion that was left as the basis for a sun-dial. This was sometimes a flat one, as at St. Mary's-on-the-Hill, Chester, and sometimes a four-sided one, as at Acton, where a very elaborate one of the latter description may be seen. In this

latter case the base, out of which the octagonal shaft rises, rests upon a pedestal of three steps, and the square stone, with its dial-face on each side, is surmounted by a round knob. On the top of the cube there was this inscription: on the north, "Tempus fugit: mors venit"; and on the south, "Ut hora: sic vita." Originally this cross must have been very fine in its proportions, and a conspicuous object, whether it occupied its present position (at the west of the church) or not. In the churchyard of St. John the Baptist, Chester, is a sun-dial, which probably stands where the *Churchyard Cross* stood, as marked in an old plan of the end of the fifteenth century preserved in the British Museum. In the old chapter-house of this church are preserved some fragments of crosses of a remarkable character. They are of beautiful design, and are fully described by the Bishop of Bristol in vol. xlix. of the *British Archæological Journal*. He assigns them to the pre-Norman period, and designates them as British, and prior to 903, when the Bréts were driven out of this part of England. In his opinion the fragments of two beautiful sculptured shafts are as fine in their work as any of the pre-Norman monuments left in England. Fragments of crosses of a similar character, and probably of a similar date, are to be found at Neston, Bromborough, and West Kirby, and a portion of one from Hilbre Island is now in the Grosvenor Museum at Chester. Most of these have circular wheel heads with three projections, a type of cross which (according to Mr. Romilly Allen) is common to North Wales and Cornwall, but does not appear to be known elsewhere. Some of the crosses here mentioned, besides others elsewhere, as at Disley (now at Lyme Hall) and at Cheadle, have no doubt been sepulchral, either as headstones or flat ones. Some, however, have been *Churchyard* or *Preaching Crosses*, and a notable instance of this is to be found in the fragments now preserved at Bromborough. The late Mr. E. W. Cox gave a very accurate and careful description of these, and

a design for the reconstruction of the cross, which would have stood about 10 feet high. A similar one once existed at Wallasey, and is described in a MS. history of that parish early in the seventeenth century. It is said to have been broken in three pieces by the soldiers of William III., and afterwards used for steps to the churchyard stile. In many of our churchyards, as at Bebington and at Shocklach (and no doubt there are many other instances), the pedestals or bases of crosses are to be seen. In the latter place the stones of the three steps have been carefully refixed, and the stem been lengthened a foot at its lower end so that it might fit into the socket on the top base. On the top of the stem (from which, of course, the cross had been removed) are four semi-circular holes systematically placed opposite to each other, 2 to 2½ inches in diameter, and 1½ inches deep. These are not dowel or cramp holes for the affixing of a sun-dial, or for the cross itself; and it has been conjectured that marketing and other transactions would take place here, and that when the plague was raging these holes would be filled with vinegar, in which the coins would be placed, so as to render them free from infection. Many of our readers will think of other examples which are left, some, it may be, in their own churchyards, and will be able to associate with them scenes of former days. They may picture to themselves the congregations gathered round them listening to the monk or friar or other early preacher as he unfolded the story of which the cross was the centre and the emblem, and pressed upon his hearers the lessons it was to teach, and the impression it was to make upon their daily lives. Then, in some cases, these fragments which are left have preserved to us wonderful specimens of decorative treatment, interesting not merely to the archæological student, but also to the ordinary individual, as indications of the art and skill and thoroughness of past generations, and thus as treasured memorials of olden days. Sometimes the *Churchyard Cross* has been restored in recent years, as

at Over Peover and St. Mary's-on-the-Hill, Chester. In each case the shortened shaft had been made the receptacle of a sun-dial. At Peover the restored cross is a memorial to the late Sir Philip Mainwaring. On an octagonal shaft of Portland stone a moulded capped head has been placed, on which is carved the figure of our Lord upon the cross with St. Mary and St. John under a gabled canopy. The cross at St. Mary's, Chester, is a floriated one of Yorkshire stone: at the bottom of the new work is a border with four angels, and above this architectural canopies or niches, in one of which is the patron saint of the church, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The cross occupies a most commanding position overlooking the river and the city walls. Other examples will no doubt occur to many of our readers.

Mention must be made, though an accurate description cannot be given, of Clulow Cross, near Wincle, of the Bow Stones on Lyme Moor, of two at Ludworth, and of three in the Public Park at Macclesfield. They are singular in their construction, the shafts being square at the top and round at the bottom. Mr. Romilly Allen has given a careful description of these, which have great antiquarian interest, but has not suggested what their origin may have been, though he classes them amongst early Christian monuments. Whilst they may have been memorial in the first instance, they may afterwards have served the purpose of reading a lesson and imparting instruction to the wayfarer as he passed by, or to the observer as he noted them from a distance.

Of *Market Crosses* the county has some noteworthy examples. Some of these are to be found in places where markets are no longer held, and thus stand out as witnesses of departed greatness. A notable instance of this is found at Bromborough, in the Wirral. Though a simple village, it formerly had a market on Monday, which was granted in 1277 to the Abbot and Monastery of St. Warburgh, in Chester, together with a three days' fair at the festival of

Base of Old Village Cross, Eaton, near Tarporley.

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St. Barnabas, the patron saint of the church. The market, of course, has long since ceased to be held, but in the centre of the village the site of the Market Cross is marked by the ancient steps, eight in number, on which was erected a few years ago a handsome cross. In this case it can only recall what once has been. At Lymm (where again no market is now held) is another example of a different kind. Here the lower steps are carved out of the natural rock. On the top one stands, not a cross, but a stone building, supported on four columns, with a gabled roof, surmounted by a knob facing each way. On the gables are sundials, which have been renewed, and on the top a central pinnacle with weather-cock. On one of the lower steps are the stocks, very perfect examples of these old-time punishment seats. The grooved uprights still remain, and the woodwork, with a double pair of holes (so that two offenders might be in durance vile at the same time), though much chipped and broken, is still complete. In the little hamlet of Eaton, in the parish of Tarporley, at the junction of the roads may be seen a flight of steps, on which once evidently rested a cross, the place of which is now occupied by a growing tree. The position seems to bring it into the category of market crosses. Was it in humble imitation of larger places that village crosses were erected in the centre of the hamlet, and did they thus give their religious sanction to the business which might be transacted beneath them, even though no markets, in the proper sense of the word, were held there? At Macclesfield, the remains of the old Market Cross now stand in the Park, where the uncomfortable town stocks of iron may also be seen. In other places in the county no doubt similar relics have been preserved; but it is in the Market-place of Sandbach that the greatest treasures of this kind are to be seen. Of the Sandbach crosses Ormerod has said, "They may indisputably be ranked among the finest monuments of antiquity of this kind in the kingdom." Similarly Mr. Romilly Allen has said, "Much of the finest series of figure subjects probably in all England is to be

seen on the mutilated crosses at Sandbach." The origin of the crosses is veiled in obscurity. It has been asserted that they were put up in the year 608, when Penda returned a Christian convert to Mercia, attended, according to Bede, by four priests deputed to preach the gospel throughout his dominions. But though this statement may be quite conjectural, there is no doubt that they may be placed at a very early date. Mr. Romilly Allen thinks that the earliest date which can be assigned to any Christian monument in Cheshire is in the second half of the seventh century; so that he (no mean authority) would not accept the above statement.

The crosses have had a chequered history. They were broken down and defaced in the civil wars in the reign of Charles I. The pieces were then dispersed, and were taken possession of by different people. One of the largest was removed to Utkinton Hall, thence later to Tarporley Rectory, and finally to Oulton Park, where it stood for some time near the park wall, not far from the lodge. Other pieces had a similar experience. Dr. Ormerod was chiefly instrumental in gathering the fragments together, one having been built into a wall near the town well, and another used as a step of a cottage. Fortunately the stone, though local, is of a much harder grit than the ordinary Cheshire sandstone, and in consequence the carving has not suffered to anything like the extent it otherwise would have done by these removals and by weather. Considering the unique character of the crosses, this is a matter of sincere congratulation. Mr. Allen suggests that they were erected "to encourage devotion in a public place by the religious subjects sculptured on them"; and to this we might add, to urge upon all who transacted business there that their dealings should be marked by truth and justice. The two crosses stand on a substructure of two steps, with two sockets in which the crosses are fixed. At the angle of each stage of the platform are stone posts, on which figures have been rudely carved. The crosses are now of unequal

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Sandbach Crosses.

height, if ever they were of the same dimensions. The taller one is 16 feet 8 inches high; the shorter one 11 feet 11 inches. On the shorter cross one piece, and on the taller one two pieces, have evidently suffered somewhat when they were taken away, as the carving on them is less distinct than on the rest. The following description will give some idea of the elaborate nature of the carvings, and will show that the opinion of Dr. Ormerod and other experts is amply justified, and that the county, and specially the town, of Sandbach may be proud of possessing such treasures. In the larger cross the framework, in which the figures on each side are included, divides near the base and becomes forked, and in the angles on the east side are figures of cherubs looking upwards. Immediately above this is a large circle containing three figures, representing the Virgin enthroned, holding the Holy Child, with a saint on either side and the Holy Dove above. In the next compartment are three figures, and it has been suggested that they may represent the Baptism of our Lord, though it would seem to be unusual to have three figures in such representation. The Holy Dove is again observed here on the right. The longer panel above this has in the lower division the Nativity, the ox and the ass being seen on either side of the manger-cradle. Then there is the Crucifixion, with the sun and moon above and the Virgin and St. John below; and surrounding this are the symbols of the four Evangelists. On this latter point Mr. Romilly Allen remarks: "The association of the symbols of the four Evangelists with the Crucifixion is somewhat unusual, as well as in the form of the symbols, which resembles those on one of the crosses at Ilkley, in Yorkshire, and on a small fragment of a cross shaft at Halton, in Lancashire." Perhaps the association of the four Evangelists with the Crucifixion may be intended to emphasise the fact that that event is recorded with much minuteness by each of them, and is thus the central fact of the gospel story. The west side of this cross is divided into eight double compartments. The first part is filled by

dragons and other zoomorphic designs, and in other parts representations of winged figures. The scriptural scenes are pronounced to be the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Zacharias; Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross; our Saviour led bound before Pilate; Christ in glory; and St. Peter with his keys. On the south side we find a variety of foliage, knots, and elaborate ornaments; and on the north side a number of figures, the most conspicuous being a large fish, with tongue triply cloven. The smaller cross bears a variety of human figures placed within niches and lozenges, with one group apparently intended to represent the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. There are at least three different patterns in what may be called the knot ornamentation, which may be thus described: knots derived from a three-cord plait, figure-of-eight knots, and a pattern derived from a four-cord plait. This last is one of extreme rarity in this country, there being, in Mr. Romilly Allen's opinion, no other instance of its occurrence elsewhere. It is, however, to be found on a splendid sword of the Viking period found at Ultuna, in Sweden. Mr. Romilly Allen, commenting on the crosses, remarked that, "The way in which the designs are arranged in several different kinds of panels is worthy of notice. Some of the panels have square tops, others round tops, others are diamond-shaped, and others triangular. They are also in some cases placed in double rows, and are not always opposite each other. On one of the shafts the panels are shaped like a thimble, and aggregated in twos and threes in an extraordinary way."

It will be understood from this that these monuments, whatever be their origin, are of priceless value, and offer for the student much food for reflection, and for the ordinary individual objects for admiration.

It is satisfactory to know that the local authorities at Sandbach fully appreciate these treasures. Quite recently they consulted the Council of the Chester and North Wales Archæological and Historic Society as to their condition, and as to whether any further steps should be taken for their

preservation. Accordingly two members of the Council with expert knowledge visited the place, and came to the conclusion that beyond the careful pointing of some joints nothing was necessary. They thought that a fence or barricade of any kind would interfere with the harmony of the design, and that if a careful watch was exercised to see that no damage was done by children or mischievous persons, the crosses would last in their present condition for generations, the nature of the stone being hard and durable. Still more recently Sandbach has been visited by the Cambrian Archæological Society, and as a consequence of that visit it is probable that casts or squeezes will be taken of the designs on the crosses, and that thus a more close and careful examination of them will be rendered possible. This may lead to the elucidation of some of the doubtful points in connection with their interpretation, and so to the clearing up of a good deal which is at present uncertain. At any rate, we may hope that for many generations Sandbach will be known as the happy possessor and the jealous guardian of these early monuments, and that for many a long year amongst the "Memorials of Old Cheshire" will be reckoned these wonderful and unique crosses.

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ECHOES FROM FARNDON

By the late Rev. L. E. Owen

[The sudden death of Mr. Owen prevented him from recasting the materials he had gathered and the paper he had written. It has been a labour of love to the Archdeacon of Chester to do this, and to add some little matter bearing upon the points which Mr. Owen, with his full and sympathetic knowledge of the place, had brought into such clear prominence.]

FARNDON (Ferenton in Domesday Book) is a village about eight miles from Chester, and small though it is, it has played no unimportant part in the history of the county. It is situated on the banks of the Dee, immediately opposite to Holt, in Wales, with which it is connected by a fine stone bridge of nine arches. Many people nowadays will only think of the extensive fields of strawberries for which Farndon is famous, and it will therefore be a revelation to them to learn that the village in former days was a place of some importance.

Going back to Roman times, we must remember that Farndon was on the road between Chester and Wroxeter, and that it commanded the ferry, the first means of crossing the river above Chester. The importance of this situation in that early period has recently been brought out by the discovery of extensive Roman remains at Holt, and within half a mile of Farndon Bridge. Here cartloads of broken pottery, tiles, and drain-pipes have been found, many of which bear the stamp of "Leg. xx. v.v.," with that regiment's peculiar badge of the boar. The excavations are still proceeding, and fortunately are being conducted under the supervision of an ardent antiquarian, Mr. Arthur Acton,

who is the occupier of the site. It is too soon yet to form an adequate opinion of the bearing of this discovery on past history. That an important Roman station existed here there can be no doubt, and it must have extended its distinction to Farndon, at the opposite side of the river. In fact, Roman tiles and portions of a hypocaust have been found at Crewe Hill, the residence of Mr. Harry Barnston, in the parish and about a mile south of the village of Farndon. It has been suggested that the site at Holt may have been occupied by kilns for the manufacture of tiles and pipes. The profusion in which these are found and the character of some of them are somewhat in favour of this idea. Large supplies would be needed for the neighbouring city of Chester, and this may have been the most convenient spot for making them. But if this were so, the factory would no doubt be protected in some way, and the excavations which are proceeding will probably reveal something, and may clear up the matter. In any case, Farndon would derive considerable importance from its proximity to Holt, as it was here that the river was crossed; if Holt was a camp, there would be frequent communications through Farndon between it and Chester; if a factory, the articles constructed would have to be conveyed through the place in the same way. We can well imagine that in those bygone ages Farndon witnessed a considerable, if not a constant, stream of traffic between Wales and Chester. It is possible that Holt, and not Bangor-is-y-coed, may have been the site of the Roman *Bovium*, and the late Mr. Thompson Watkins, in his *Roman Cheshire*, in 1886 wrote: "If Bovium were on this line of road, which I do not think, it would certainly be at Holt or Farndon, for the distance, nine English or ten Roman miles, exactly agrees, whilst Bangor is at least fifteen Roman miles from Chester." If this were the case, Farndon would derive considerable importance from its nearness to the place, and would in some measure be a kind of outwork and protection to it.

Coming on to a later period, Farndon, from its position,

must often have been the scene of stirring events. It was, as will have been gathered, not far from Bangor Monachorum, and communications between the two places must have been frequent. It is conceivable that the first Christian church was planted at Farndon, or the first preaching of Christianity given, by the monks from that monastery, but this must be a matter of conjecture. But when Ethelfrith, the pagan King of Northumbria, having conquered Chester, invaded Wales, A.D. 613, he must have passed through Farndon, or been in its immediate neighbourhood. It was then that the "Battle of Chester" was fought, and that the King massacred 1200 monks upon the field, because, though not bearing arms, they were praying for his defeat, and afterwards burnt down the monastic buildings, murdered the remnant of the monks, and destroyed their libraries. Those must have been anxious times for the dwellers in Farndon. No doubt in the years that followed they were continually being roused to activity, and had to protect themselves from constant attacks from their neighbours, the Welsh; but all this we must imagine, for we have no definite record of it. We are told that Edward the Elder, son of King Alfred, died at Farndon in 925, on his way south from fighting at Chester. He was carried to Winchester and buried in the Cathedral. The quotation from William of Malmesbury is as follows: After the battle at Chester "paucis diebus apud Ferenduna mortuus est Edvardus." Some think that this refers to Farndon in Nottinghamshire, though the wounded monarch could hardly have accomplished so long a ride in a few days. The statement or tradition is an interesting one, and it would be well if further confirmatory information were forthcoming. It is curious (though it may have no connection with this event) that there was afterwards at Farndon one of the Cheshire sanctuaries called King's Marsh. "It was a wild, desolate district, surrounded by a ditch to mark the limit of safety for fugitives and 'foreigners'; for any who sought the protection of the Earl of Chester, or who were acting as

FARNDON BRIDGE.

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mercenaries against his enemies, might reside here in safety for a year and day, provided they used no nails or pins in the erection of their squatter's tent."[1]

The bridge which succeeded the ferry has always been famous as affording connection with Wales. The next bridge below is at Aldford, some six miles by river, and the next above at Bangor, about fourteen miles distant by the river, which winds considerably. The date for it given by Pennant is 1345, and he says, "Until lately" (by which he may mean 1820 to 1830) "the date was over one of the arches," but that has now disappeared. It consists of nine arches, one of which is higher than the rest; and in the roadway above this is some very massive masonry on the north side, indicating the site of the guardhouse, under which was a drawbridge, used with considerable effect at the battle of Farndon Bridge, when the Parliamentarians drove the Royalists over into Wales in 1643. In the Constable's accounts for 1727 occurs the item: "Payd for the Guard House, 00. 01. 09." The best part of the old bridge is to be seen by going into the third bay from Holt on the north side, and observing the tracery of a portion of some beautiful windows. The western one has remains of steps leading down to the water. Attention is directed to this, as but few visitors notice it. A sad tragedy is connected with this bridge. Prince Madoc, son of Griffith, Lord of Dinas Bran, had two sons, of whom Earl Warren and Roger Mortimer, Earl of the Marches, were appointed guardians by Edward I. These lords soon conspired to free themselves from their charges and possess themselves of their estates. Accordingly they caused them, one being of the age of ten and the other eight, to be thrown over the bridge and drowned. The authority for this story is in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, but for many years a variation of it was current in the country under the fable of two young

[1] Coward's *Picturesque Cheshire*, p. 278. The title may perhaps be due to the fact that King Richard III. granted Over-Marsh to Sir William Stanley, the name being subsequently changed to King's Marsh.

fairies who had been destroyed in this manner. There were also legends of their ghosts being seen at certain times. It was Roger Mortimer who, with Isabella, wife of Edward II., was responsible for that King's death at Berkeley Castle.

The bridge must have been the scene of many a fierce fight when the marauding Welsh sought to cross to Farndon; sometimes also between the factions of the two towns, for though such near neighbours, the men of Farndon and Holt were frequently at loggerheads. In the Civil War, however, the bridge came into great prominence. Sir William Brereton forced his passage over it into Wales in November 1643 on his way to Hawarden. A few years ago letters from him bearing on the point were published in the Reports of the Historical Manuscript Commission. They show how the Royalists had made a tower and a drawbridge, and put strong gates on the bridge between Holt and Farndon; and these were so strong "that they and wee conceived it verrie difficulte, if not altogether ympossible, to make way for our passage over the bridge." However, Sir William, having by a feint drawn off some of the Royalists, made a fierce attack on the bridge, cut the ropes of the drawbridge, forced open the gates, and gained possession of the bridge. Many of the Royalist troops retreated to Holt Castle, which was strongly fortified, but Sir William pushed on and captured Wrexham, and eventually, as stated in another paper in this volume, occupied Hawarden Castle. Two years later the Royalist cavalry, coming from Wales under the command of Sir Marmaduke Langdale, came over the bridge before the disastrous battle on Rowton Moor, and some few of those who escaped made use of the same way for their retreat. And during this anxious time, or at any rate a portion of it, the church at Farndon was turned into a garrison for soldiers, and naturally suffered in consequence. It was burnt by the Parliamentarians in 1645, and traces of this may still be seen, as also the marks of the shot and bullets which were discharged at it.

The church probably occupies the site of an earlier Saxon wooden building. Like the church of Holt, it is dedicated to St. Chad, who is the patron saint of a great many churches in the boundaries of the old kingdom of Mercia. It stands on an eminence, and is 86 feet above the sea-level, whilst the bridge is 12½ miles distant from the weir at Chester. The nave and pillars are late Norman of the close of the twelfth century. Originally the nave had a sloping roof, the lines of which may be seen above the tower arch. The clerestory windows were added at the rebuilding of the church after the fire. The tower, which can be seen from a considerable distance, is said to be of the thirteenth century, and the aisle windows are of the date of Charles II. Formerly there was good stained glass of an heraldic character relating to the families of Leche of Carden and Bostock of Churton, but this has entirely disappeared. A great treasure, however, is to be seen in the Barnston Chapel, on the south side, where there is a small stained-glass window of a character almost absolutely unique. It contains coloured figures of the four loyal Royalist families who fought for King Charles I. The first top light has gone, but on the plain glass is the inscription: "This window being ruinated was repaired by Dean Cholmondeley." In the second light we have Sir William Mainwaring; in the third, Sir Thomas (or Sir Roger) Grosvenor; and in the fourth, Captain William Barnston. In the centre is a representation of Sir Francis Gamul (bearing the badge of baronetcy) of Chester, with whom King Charles witnessed the defeat of his army on Rowton Moor. In the lowest light is a picture of Mr. Barrington of Chester, who is carrying an ensign most gracefully. The glass is most interesting, and the details of the various panels are very full, the coats of arms of the various officers being given, and thus leading to their identification. The great gun or arquebus should be noted, with its support or carrier looking like a pitchfork. Large pikes and helmets like those depicted are preserved at

Crewe Hill, the residence of Mr. Harry Barnston. The glass has been carefully protected, under the advice of Messrs. Powell, and Mr. Barnston has written a description, which is placed underneath. The window may probably be dated soon after the Restoration. The Barnston family have resided in the parish since 1370.

Another feature of the church is the ancient stone effigy of a knight in armour. The probable date of this is 1346. On his shield is written in Lombardic letters: "Hic jacet Patricius de Barton. Orate pro eo." Barton, it may be remarked, is one of the townships of Farndon. He is semi-plated with chain armour and surcoat. The arms or distinctions on the shield are: "Argent, a bend cotised." At his feet are two animals, a dog and a scaly animal, various interpretations being given of them, but none so far satisfactory.[1] The face of the knight was probably disfigured when the church was used as barracks. There were two other stone effigies in the church, but they were broken up about 1780 to mend the paths! One is said to have been a monument to Madocus, a prince in Wales, already alluded to.

The overseers' and wardens' books give many interesting particulars bearing upon the state of affairs at the time of the Civil War. Many of these were published in *The Cheshire Sheaf* in 1884. The following will give some indication of their character: "1644. To the Constable for the Treaned (*trained*) Souldier for tow months' pay for the loar (*lower?*) house, xviiij*d.*" "1644, 20 Jan. Payd to Crestlendon (*Christleton*) to the garrison there, x*d.*" "1644, 21 ffebruary. Richard Oakes took three measures of malt to ffarndon sege, and the 7th of this month a lofe of bread 14 lb." The experience of these anxious days no doubt led the parochial authorities to the conclusion that permanent arrangements should be made for the protection of the place and district. After

[1] Lysons describes them thus: "On one of the shields a lion rampant, and on another a wolf passant regardant (the coat of Daresbury)."

the raising of the siege of Chester we find this entry: "1646, 28 May. Payd to Thos. Moltra, constable, 2 mises, one for the building of a munt (*mount*) in the view of the Castle of the Holt for to keep them better in, the other, &c." This building of a mount is most interesting. There is still a place called "The Mount Field" on the Farndon side of the river, nearly opposite Holt Castle. Upon this spot in 1646 cannon were placed, and cannon-balls have been found in the field. Many other entries from these carefully preserved records and from the registers might be given, but these must suffice to show the importance of Farndon, which must from the earliest times have been a commanding position, and thus have filled no mean place in the annals of the history of the county and the country at large.

It will not be out of place to mention here that Farndon is one of the parishes which keep up a *Rushbearing Sunday*. Of course this does not imply, as in olden days, the strewing of the church with fresh rushes, which was done for the comfort of the worshippers. At stated times, and generally at the time of the patronal feast of a church, the old rushes were cleared away and new ones carried in, and this was done with due solemnity, and the occasion made into a parochial festival. Now at Farndon, Shocklach, and some other places, the graves are decked with rushes and flowers, and thus the memory of departed friends is cherished, whilst it is a time for reunion of families, and distant members revisit their homes.

We can give no account, not even traditional, of the prowess of Patrick de Barton and the other knights whose effigies have been mentioned. They probably would have been worth recording if this had been possible. But Farndon can, at any rate, boast of some distinguished natives. The Barnston Chapel in the church cannot but remind us of some, and specially Wm. Barnston, portrayed in the window there. He died 6th March 1664, and on the tablet to his memory he is thus described: "He was a

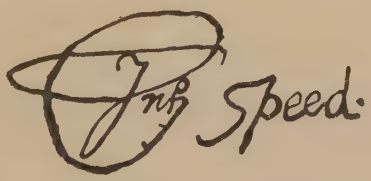
person of great worth and integrity, ventured his life and fortune with King Charles the First; was sent prisoner from Oxford to London, where he continued till he paid his composition for his estate." In later years a member of the same family, Roger Barnston, distinguished himself in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny, dying of his wounds at Cawnpore; and his deeds are commemorated by a tall stone obelisk by the side of the road in the parish. But Farndon has produced one distinguished man of peace at least besides these strenuous soldiers. John Speed, generally known as the historian, was born here in 1552. He was a tailor by trade, and migrated first to Wrexham and then to London. Here, "under the favour of the Company of Merchant Taylors, he was rescued from his menial employment." He must, of course, have shown some aptitude for study to have attracted this notice. His opportunities at Farndon cannot have been great, as the school there was only founded in the year of his death. In passing we may note that this place produced another antiquary in the person of Dr. Williamson, who was born at Chilton, a township of this parish, and whose manuscript history of the Cheshire manors (*Villare Cestriense*) has been of much use to subsequent writers. Speed apparently rose to high office in the company, which had just shown its warm interest in education by establishing in 1561 the Merchant Taylors' School, which has proved such a valuable institution. Queen Elizabeth had two favourite antiquarians—one was Sir John Camden and the other John Speed. The former of these is no doubt the more famous of the two, and his researches have been of great benefit to subsequent historians, whilst his name is perpetuated in the title of one of the History Professorships at Oxford. But Speed did very good work and has left behind him a great deal that is valuable in his stupendous volumes, *The History of Great Britain.* Hulbert, in his *Cheshire Antiquities* (1828), states that "he has often been denominated the

Elucidator of the Biography and History of Great Britain." Had he had the advantages of a liberal education he would probably have been as eminent a scholar as his patrons, Sir Fulke Greville and Sir Robert Cotton. By the generous assistance of the former of these he was enabled to withdraw from the drudgery of business, and to devote himself to his favourite pursuit, the study of history. How Speed became known to him we do not know, but that great patron of learning (afterwards Lord Brooke, who was assassinated in 1628) had the discernment to discover and the generosity to encourage talent and genius, however humble in rank or obscure in birth. John Speed must have become acquainted with the literary men of his time, as Bacon, Shakespeare, Raleigh, Spenser, and others, and from his association with them must have learnt a great deal and have acquired that taste which stood him in good stead in the gathering of information. When his origin and early years are taken into account, he stands out as a wonderful example of the acquisition of knowledge under difficulties, and so of patience and perseverance in endeavouring to overcome them. He must have been gifted with great natural talents, and he certainly made a good use of them. He was a notable map-maker, and that at a time when such art must have been rare and hard to acquire. Many old books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain maps drawn by him, and these generally were embellished with certain artistic accessories, and were not confined to mere outlines and names. Thus "the ground plan of Chester" has also a view of Chester from the south-west side, the arms of the seven Earls and eight Barons of Chester, and the arms of the city, as also a reduced "mapp of Cheshire." Similarly the map of "the Countye Palatine of Chester" has also a plan "of that most ancient citye," the arms of the Earls, and of Speed and his assistant. In the body of the map are trees, hills, windmills, and churches, whilst ships and fishes (of a wonderful order) are to be seen in the estuary. An angel is depicted with one hand on a globe on a table, and

the other holding a shield on which are Speed's coat of arms, and underneath the inscription: "Performed by John Speed assisted by William Smyth. And are to be solde by Roger Rea the Elder and younger at the Golden Crosse in Cornhill against the Exchange." It will be gathered from this that in the production of his works Speed must have taken the greatest pains, and that he was not content with merely following the ordinary lines. The following quotation from the 37th chapter of his book, dealing with the County Palatine of Chester, may be interesting as showing the style in which he wrote: "If the affection to my natural producer blind not the judgement of this my Survey; for aire and soil it equalls the best, and farre exceeds her neighbours the next Counties: for although the Climate be cold, and toucheth the degree of Latitude 54, yet the warmth from the *Irish Seas* melteth the Snow, and dissolveth the Ice sooner there than in those parts that are farther off; and so wholesome for life that the inhabitants generally attain to many years. The soil is fat, fruitfull, and rich, yielding abundantly both profit and pleasures of man. The Champion grounds make glad the hearts of their Tillers; the Medows imbroidered with divers sweet-smelling flowers; and the Pastures make the Kine's udders to strout to the Paile, from whom and wherein the best Cheese of all Europe is made." No apology can be necessary for giving this opinion of his native county in *Memorials of Old Cheshire*, as it shows the estimation in which he held it three hundred years ago. Speed did not forget his old home and the church where he was baptized, for he presented a silver chalice to the church. Unfortunately this has disappeared, and one of the chalices now in use bears the inscription: "This Cup was given in exchange for one given to Farndon Church by John Speed." The assassination of his patron, Lord Brooke, in September 1628, and the death about the same time of his wife, with whom he had spent fifty-seven years of his life, made a great impression upon Speed, and he died 28th July 1629, and was buried in St. Giles' Church,

Cripplegate, where a monument was erected to his memory, on which was inscribed: "Civis Londinensis mercatorum scissorum fratris servi fidelissimi regiarum majestatum Elizabethæ, Jacobi, and Caroli nunc superstitis." His portrait is in the National Portrait Gallery. He published his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* in 1606, accompanied with the first set of maps ever published in England. His *History of Great Britain* appeared in 1644 after his death, and beneath the plate of his portrait is a long Latin inscription, of which a portion is given above. In this he is described as a "Geographer of our lands, a faithful historian of the antiquity of Britain, and a most elegant delineator of sacred genealogy." This last is an allusion to an elaborate work of his entitled, *The Cloud of Witnesses; or, The Genealogies of Scripture confirming the truth of the Sacred History, &c.*

Farndon and the county of Cheshire may well be proud of her son, who (to use Mr. Hulbert's words) "by his character, talents, industry, and perseverance gained friends among the most distinguished individuals in the kingdom for learning and transcendent abilities; and who was a man of genuine enlightened piety, and made his talents and his studies subservient to the cause of virtue and true religion."



FACSIMILE OF SPEED'S AUTOGRAPH

SOME CHESHIRE CUSTOMS, PROVERBS, AND FOLK-LORE

By Joseph C. Bridge,
M.A., Mus. Doc. Oxon. et Dunelm., F.S.A.

CHESHIRE, although it borders on Wales, has caught but little of the Celtic imagination; and it is remarkable that the only Celtic legend current is found on the northern side of the county. The folk-lore of this County Palatine cannot compare with the quantity and quality of the Shropshire folk-lore; but legends are to a great extent born of valley and hill and stream, and Cheshire, with its vast plain, is, with the exception of the river Dee, deficient in those material phenomena which are present in such profusion in the neighbouring border county.

But Michael Drayton says of Cheshire men that "they of all England most to antient customs cleave"; and an attempt will be made in this chapter to give a general and compressed account of the customs which still exist and of folk-lore which has been, and still is, of great interest. The legends connected with the river Dee, and the many fine old customs connected with Chester itself are omitted, as they can easily be read in every history of the city. For other omissions the want of space must plead excuse.

Souling

The most curious Cheshire custom still existent, and one which has not attracted the attention it deserves, is called "souling." The day after All Saints' Day (now

November 1st) is All Souls' Day. This was established as a festival of the Church about the tenth century, and in the Middle Ages it was customary for persons dressed in black to traverse the streets, ringing a bell at every corner and calling on all to join in prayer for the souls in Purgatory, and to contribute towards the paying of masses for them. After the Reformation the demand for money was transformed into demands for liquid and solid refreshment by the "soulers."

But at Salerno, we are told that a custom prevailed previous to the fifteenth century of providing in every home on the eve of All Souls' Day, a sumptuous entertainment for souls in Purgatory, who are supposed to revisit temporarily the scene of their earthly labours. Every one left their house and remained in church all night, while the feast was consumed by thieves who made a harvest out of this pious custom. Such is the origin of our "souling," and it seems probable, therefore, that "soul-cakes" were not, at first, meant for consumption by the "soulers" themselves. The custom is still observed, and on the eve of All Souls' (*i.e.* on the night of All Saints' Day) bodies of children still parade Chester and Cheshire villages singing a portion of the old souling song, but tacked on to debased and incorrect versions of the old words, and in many cases amounting to mere doggerel.[1]

Now, the melody sung is most interesting, for it is undoubtedly pre-Reformation and is cast in the style of the Church music of the period, for there was no sharp dividing line between secular and sacred music when "souling" first began.[2] The "punctum" or drop of a fifth is very characteristic, and will be found in Merbecke and Church writers of the period.

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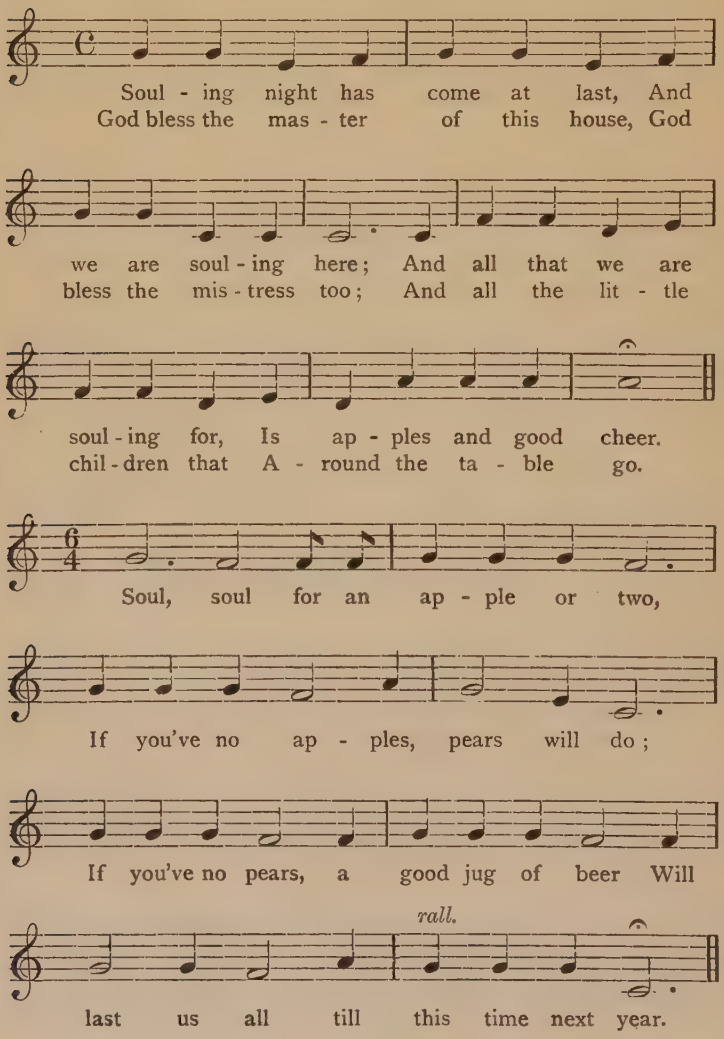
[1] *e.g.* Instead of "Soul, soul, for an apple or two," I have heard them sing, "Sole, sole, sole of my shoe"!

[2] I heard a comic song sung by a rustic in Sussex a few years ago to the plain-song which is used for the hymn "O come! O come! Emmanuel," in *Hymns Ancient and Modern.*

The following is the tune as taken down by me many times in the past thirty years, though it is now getting greatly corrupted and altered, and will probably soon die out. No accompaniment is used:—


Soul - ing night has come at last, And
God bless the mas - ter of this house, God
we are soul - ing here; And all that we are
bless the mis - tress too; And all the lit - tle
soul - ing for, Is ap - ples and good cheer.
chil - dren that A - round the ta - ble go.
Soul, soul for an ap - ple or two,
If you've no ap - ples, pears will do;
If you've no pears, a good jug of beer Will
rall.
last us all till this time next year.

Other verses are:—

Likewise you men and maidens,
Your cattle and your store,
And all that dwells within your gates,
We wish you ten times more.

The lanes are very dirty,
My shoes are very thin;
I have a little pocket,
To put a penny in.

It will be noticed that the "refrain"[1] practically consists of only two notes, so that it could easily be lengthened at the will of the singer and new lines inserted. Here are some of the oldest rimes to which it is sung:—

Soul! Soul! for a soul-cake,
Pray, good missis! a soul-cake,
An apple, a pear, a plum or a cherry,
Or any good thing to make us merry—
One for Peter, two for Paul,
And three for Him who made us all.

Up with the kettle and down with the pan
Give us { an answer / our souling } and we'll be gone.[2]

The following Staffordshire version is valuable for the statement that they "have all been praying for the soul departed."

"Soul day, soul day,
We be come a-souling;
Pray, good people, remember the poor,
And give us all a soul-cake.
Soul day, soul day, soul,
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for Him who made us all.

[1] Mr. Fuller-Maitland gives this as the tune in *English County Songs*, p. 30. This is a mistake: he only has the "refrain."

[2] There is always an "up" and "down" in all the versions met with, but, as pointed out in *Shropshire Folk-Lore*, the original no doubt was:—

"Up with the ladder and down with the can,"

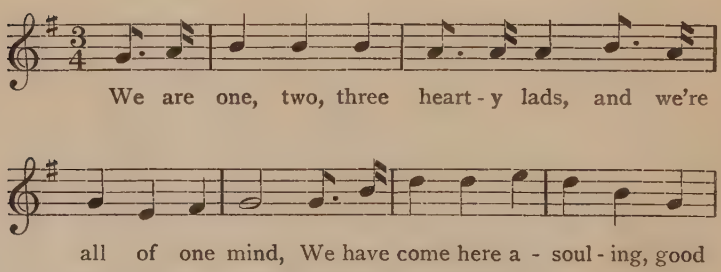
i.e. the ladder is to be raised to the apple-loft and the can taken down in the cellar for ale or cider.

An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry,
Or any good thing to make us merry.
Soul day, soul day,
We have all been praying
For the soul departed:
So pray, good people, give us a cake,
For we are all poor people,
Well known to you before;
So give us a cake, for charity's sake,
And our blessing we'll leave at your door.
Soul! soul! for an apple or two,
If you have no apples, pears will do;
If pears are scarce, then cakes from your pan,
Give us our souling, and we'll be gone."[1]

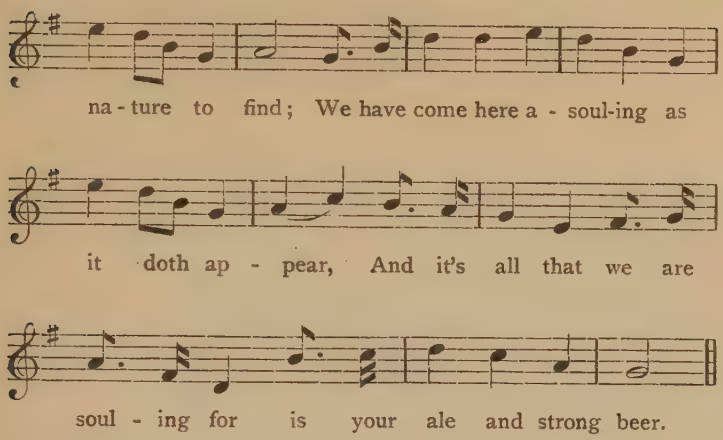
The following is a Lancashire reference:—

"There is a singular custom still kept up at Great Marton in the Fylde district on this day. In some places it is called 'soul-caking,' but there it is named 'psalm-caking'—from their reciting psalms for which they receive cakes. The custom is changing its character also—for in place of collecting cakes from house to house, as in the old time, they now beg for money. The term 'psalm' is evidently a corruption of the old word 'Sal,' for soul; the mass or requiem for the dead was called 'Sal-mass,' as late as the reign of Henry VI."[2]

As time went on this tune was probably considered dull and old-fashioned, and the following has, to a limited extent, supplanted it. It is evidently an adaptation of a "pace-egging" song (see *post*):—



[1] *The Customs, Superstitions and Legends of the County of Stafford,* by C. H. Poole, p. 34.
[2] *Lancashire Folk-Lore,* p. 251, by Harland and Wilkinson.



There are two other Verses.

At Northwich, Tarporley, and other places the soulers are accompanied by one bearing an imitation head of a horse, which snaps its jaws in an alarming manner. Thus "souling" has got grafted on to the pagan custom of "hodening." At Over the soulers blacken their faces. This is a survival of the wearing of *black* already mentioned.

The "Soulers' Song," as given by Egerton Leigh, is a poor modern version, evidently adapted from a *Maying* song :—

> "Ye gentlemen of England I could have ye draw near
> To these few lines which we have wrote,
> And all ye soon shall hear
> Sweet melody of music all on this evening clear,
> For we are gone a-souling for apples and strong beer."

This is the fourth series of rimes on the subject, and the constant demand for apples and ale was to make a "wassail" bowl of "lambswool," or hot spiced ale, with toast and roasted apples in it.

Souling seems to have been confined to, or at all events to have only survived, in the counties of Cheshire and Shropshire, though why this should be so it is difficult

to say. It is also met with in the adjacent counties of Staffordshire and Lancashire, but only because it seems to have drifted over the borders. One curious reference to it occurs in *Tales and Traditions of Tenby*:[1]—

"What was called 'souling,' or 'sowling,' was practised by the female portion of the poor, who visited their wealthier neighbours, demanding 'soul' (possibly from the French *soûl*, signifying 'one's fill,' or from *saouler*, 'to satisfy with food.' See Wright's *Provincial Dictionary*), which signified, in its provincial acceptation, any condiment eaten with bread, such as meat, fish, etc., but especially *cheese*. As the usage was very generally recognised, souling-day proved, and still proves, one of the most profitable days in the calendar."

The fanciful derivation of "souling" may be passed by, but it is hard to account for this reference to it in "little England beyond Wales."

At Oswestry, on the Welsh border, it is customary to begin with:—

"Wissal, wassal, bread and possel,
Cwrw da, plas yma,[2]
Apple or a pear, plum or a cherry,
Any good thing that will make us merry."
—*Bye-gones*, December 11, 1872.

Aubrey wrote regarding Shropshire thus:—

"In Salop the die õnium Animarum (All Soules-day, Novemb. 2d) there is sett on the Board a high heap of soule-cakes lyeing one upon another like the picture of the Sew-bread in the old Bibles. They are about the bignesse of 2d cakes, and n'ly all the visitors 'that day takes one; and there is an old Rhythm or saying—

'A soule-cake, a soule-cake,
Have mercy on all Christian soules for a soule-cake.'"

"The late Mrs. Gill, of Hopton, near Hodnet, had *soul-cakes* made in her house to give away to souling children every year up to her death in 1884. They were flat round, (or sometimes oval) cakes, made of very light dough, spiced and sweetened."[3]

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[1] Published by R. Mason, Tenby, 1858, p. 17.
[2] *i.e.* "good ale (in) this place."
[3] Burne-Jackson's *Shropshire Folk-Lore*, p. 382 *et seq.* Mr. Wirt Sykes, in his *British Goblins*, quotes this, and also the information about Tenby, but adds nothing to our knowledge.

We find some of the words of the "Souling Song" in nearly every itinerant begging custom. In Montgomeryshire a New Year's rhyme is:—

"The road is very dirty,
My shoes are very thin;
Please give me a penny
To put some nails in."

Several of the verses are found in a "Wessel-cup Hymn"—a carol popular in Shropshire thirty years ago—and in customs in Worcestershire and Yorkshire.

MARLING

The traveller cannot fail to notice the large number of square pits in the green fields of Cheshire, which are very different from the round drinking ponds of the southern shires.

These "pits" are excavations from which marl has been dug to place on the surface of the surrounding land as manure, and some curious old customs and words are connected with "marling." After breakfast on the pit bank, the "head man," who was termed the "Lord of the soil," called out in a loud voice three times:

"'O! Yez! O! Yez! O! Yez! This is to give notice that Mr. ——— has given to us Marlers part of a thousand pounds, and to whomsoever will do the same we will return thanks and shout.' The men then joined hands, and, putting their heads together, shouted 'Largesse! Largesse!'"

Should any one pass through the field, the "Lord" walked up, having a marl clod on his shoulder. This was so well understood that sixpence or a shilling was usually given. If the former, it was proclaimed as "part of one hundred pounds"; if the latter, "part of one thousand pounds." At the close of the season they assembled in front of the village inn, and repeated the oration.

"Ladling and slutching" is the clearing out the water and mud from a pit. "Fea" is the soil covering the marl.

"Setting" is spreading the marl over the land; "Mid-feather," the space between the pits.

The Cheshire rhyme says:

> "He that marls sand may buy the land,
> He that marls moss shall have no loss,
> He that marls clay flings all away."

RUSH-BEARING

The strewing of the floors with rushes is an old custom, and has died hard. The farmhouses in Cheshire were strewn on the first of May with green rushes, over which lavender and rosemary were scattered. Rushes are no longer used, but a pattern is frequently worked on the flagged floor by the juice of dock leaves.[1]

Formerly all churches were strewn with rushes, and these were generally renewed on great festivals:

"1551	Rysshes at Wytsontyd - - -	vi^{d}
,,	,, ,, Mydsomer - - -	viij^{d}
,,	,, against All Hallowtyde - -	x^{d}
1584	To Edward Griffith for boughs, rishes, and other things what time the Earl of Leicester came hither	xviij^{s} ij^{d}"[2]
"1630	Paid to Robert Raborne for getting out the old rushes of the church	viij^{d}"[3]

The custom of carrying rushes to church gradually developed into a festival, and the rushes were then decorated and carried in procession. In some parishes, where the time of year was suitable, this was done on the "Wake" day of the village. Flowers and garlands were added, which "were hung up in the church; we saw these garlands remaining in several places."[4] Finally, the graves were strewn with them. This custom is still observed at Farndon with much ceremony on July 16th or the first Sunday afterwards.

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[1] Utkinton Hall, 1908.
[2] Chester Cathedral Treasurer's Accounts.
[3] Frodsham Accounts.
[4] Lyson's *Cheshire.*

Many rush-bearings, or "rush-buryings," as they are sometimes called, became riotous festivities, and the *Chester Courant* for August 6, 1810, says :

"CHRISTLETON RUSH-BEARING. — We were sorry to learn that the festivities of this annual *fête* should have been disgraced by that almost universally reprobated amusement, a Bull-bait. After this savage practice has fallen into disrepute and disgrace amongst the most uncultivated parts of the island, it is mortifying for us to record a transaction so disgraceful in the immediate vicinity of the polished city of Chester."

In Cheshire also rushes are used as a charm for warts. The charmer has a long straight rush, ties three knots in it, makes it into a circle, draws it over the wart downwards nine times, at the same time muttering a spell which he refuses to disclose on the ground that if he did so the charm would not work. In three months the wart will disappear.

The old rush-lights of Cheshire were sold at twenty for sixpence. "They were as thick as the present 'twelve' candles (twelve to the pound), but half as long again, and gave a steady but dim light. There were some curious bits of folk-lore connected with them. For instance, if a rush-light in 'sweating' curled over, it denoted death ; if a bright star appeared in the flame, it portended a letter."[1]

PACE-EGGING

This is still practised in the Wirral peninsula, and the rime sung by the children was as follows :—

"Please, Mr. Whiteleg,
Please give us an Easter egg ;
If you do not give us one,
Your hen shall lay an addled one,
Your cock shall lay a stone."

Sometimes with the addition from "Souling" of :

"One for Peter, two for Paul,
And three for the One who made us all."

[1] Burton, *Rush-Bearing*.

"In Birkenhead, for some years after the Park was laid out, there were several grassy mounds inside the railings . . . which went by the name of 'The Bouks' (Banks). . . . Every Easter Monday the children would bring baskets of coloured eggs. Then a game was played. First, wickets were fixed at intervals at the foot of the 'Bouks,' the children took their eggs to the top of the hills and rolled them down, aiming to pass them unbroken through the wickets."[1]

By degrees "Pace-Egging" became grafted on to the old mumming play which is found in nearly every county of England, and the following was sung at Thurstaston some thirty years ago. Two verses are omitted:—

I.

Here come four or five hearty lads all of one mind;
We have come a'paste-egging if you will prove kind;
If you will prove kind, and never will fail,
We'll treat our young lasses to the best of X ale.
Fol di-diddle dol-di-day.

II.

The next that steps in is Lord Nelson, you see
With a bunch of blue ribands tied on to his knee,
With a star on his breast like silver do shew,
And he comes a'paste-egging with his jolly crew.
Fol di-diddle dol-di-day.

IV.

The next that steps in is a lady so gay,
Who from her own country has run far away,
With the red cap and feathers that look very fine,
And all her delight is in drinking red wine.
Fol di-diddle dol-di-day.

VI.

The Master and Mistress that sit by the fire,
Put your hand in your pocket, that's all we desire;
Put your hand in your pocket, and pull out your purse,
And give us a trifle—you'll ne'er be any worse.
Fol di-diddle dol-di-day.

VII.

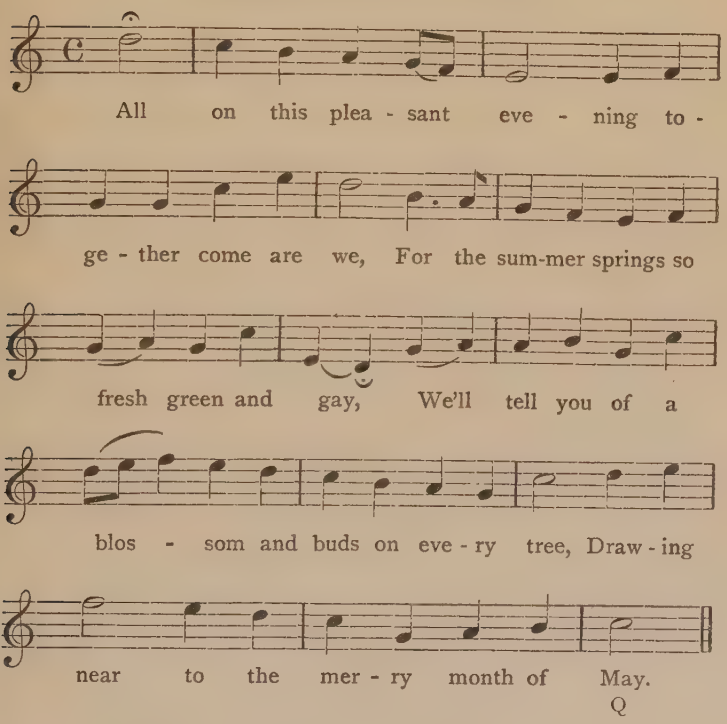
Some eggs and strong bacon we'll never deny,
For the eggs we can suck while the bacon doth fry.
Now all ye young lasses, just mind what ye are about,
If you give nought, we'll take nought, so we'll bid you good night.
Fol di-diddle dol-di-day.

[1] Gamlin's *Memories of Birkenhead.*

MAYING

The "Mayers" went about singing and soliciting alms for some weeks before the first of May. The following is a portion of one of their songs, and a variant may be found in Halliwell's *Palatine Anthology*, which was given to him by Ormerod, the Cheshire historian. The tune taken down by Egerton Leigh, and given in his book of poems, is terribly mutilated, but I have reconstucted it by the aid of a very similar Lancashire tune. It is undoubtedly old, and the commencement on the supertonic is very quaint. The words are distinctly above the average of old ballads:

CHESHIRE MAYING SONG


All on this plea - sant eve - ning to -
ge - ther come are we, For the sum-mer springs so
fresh green and gay, We'll tell you of a
blos - som and buds on eve - ry tree, Draw - ing
near to the mer - ry month of May.

CHESHIRE MAY SONG

I

All on this pleasant evening together come are we,
For the summer springs so fresh, green, and gay,
To tell you of a blossom that buds on every tree,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

II

Rise up, the master of this house, all in your chain of gold,
For the summer springs so fresh, green, and gay;
We hope you're not offended, this night we make so bold,
Drawing near the pleasant month of May.

III

Oh! rise, the mistress of this house, with gold upon your breast,
For the summer springs so fresh, green, and gay;
And if your body be asleep, we hope your soul's at rest,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.
&c. &c.

In the Halliwell-Phillipps' version each verse ends with

"Oh this is pleasant singing,
Sweet May flower is springing,
And summer comes so fresh, green, and gay."

In Chester and surrounding villages the children still carry round May garlands, and generally a small child bedecked with ribbons, but the old May songs are no longer used.

At Knutsford a May Queen is annually chosen and crowned in public. This village has many curious and pretty customs. On the occasion of a marriage there, brown sand was strewn in the streets, and on this, fanciful figures of white sand and sometimes the flowers of the season were added.

LIFTING

Hone says that the custom of *Lifting* was prevalent in Chester, but that instead of being tossed in the air, the victims were swung about in a chair.

However, a correspondent in Adams' *Weekly Courant* (printed in Chester, 26th March 1771) complains strongly of the custom of "*Lifting*, or rather the assembling in a riotous manner of a considerable number (I am sorry to say) of females at all the gates and other thoroughfares of this city to extort money from every man whose business may oblige him to pass that way. This is justly complained of by travellers, who, unacquainted with such customs (it not being suffered in any city but this) have given a considerable sum for leave to pursue their journey, and have scarce rode to the other end of the city but must again purchase the liberty of passing on." It was practised at Chester up to about the year 1860.

The custom is supposed to have reference to the Ascension of our Lord.

HARVEST HOME

When the last field of corn was cut, then the farmer had what was called a "shutting." The reapers would stand in a ring on some high ground, and one, acting as spokesman, gave out the "nominy":—

> "Oh, yes! oh, yes! oh, yes! this is to give notice
> That Mester 'Olland has gen th' seck a turn
> And sent th' owd hare into Mester Sincop's standin' curn."

Then, taking hands, they all bent down and uttered an unearthly "Wow! wow-w! wow-w!" Other "nominies" followed, and then a liberal allowance of beer went round. This was supplemented by another ceremony. The last stalks of grain were plaited and formed into a threefold strand, at which the reapers threw their sickles. The one whose aim cut it down was the winner. This was called "cutting the Neck."

CORNAGE

Cheshire has the great distinction of possessing two Forest Charter Horns held by cornage tenure, and these are still in existence.

The Wirral Horn.—The Hundred of Wirral was mainly divided between the Church and the Palatinate barons. The latter not being resident, the natives were lawless and turbulent; added to which the district was specially liable to incursions from sea-rovers. To reduce the natives to obedience, and as a matter of precaution, Ranulph de Meschines, the third Earl of Chester, about 1121, destroyed such boundaries of property as existed and planted the whole as a forest, so that "From Blacon Point to Hilbre a squirrel might jump from tree to tree"; as the old Cheshire rhyme has it.

The office of chief forester he bestowed upon Alan Sylvester, together with the manors of Storeton and Puddington, to be held by the tenure of blowing a horn, or causing it to be blown, at the "Gloverstone," Chester, on the morning of every fair-day, to indicate that the tolls payable on all goods bought or sold in the city, or within sound of that horn, during the fair, belonged to the Earl and his tenants there.

After 250 years the citizens of Chester found the forest and its freebooters such a nuisance (for, so far from checking marauders, the forest, as a hiding-place, encouraged them), that they complained to the Black Prince, and begged that he would get his father to abolish it.

In 1376–7, the last year of Edward III.'s reign, the district was disafforested. The horn and its rights had passed, by marriages of female heirs, to the Bamvilles, and then to the Stanleys of Hooton Hall. They continued as titular foresters as late as of 7 Henry VI.

The horn is thus described:—16¾ in. convex, 13¾ in. concave, 9½ in. wide at the mouth, 7 in. in the middle,

tapering to 2½ in. at the mouthpiece. The colour is yellow to light brown, with blue or black spots or flakes. It was in the possession of Sir John Stanley-Errington until his death in 1896.

The Delamere Horn.—What we now call the Forest of Delamere was originally the two forests of Mara and Mondrem, extending, roughly speaking, over all the lands between the rivers Weaver and Gowy. Mara was on the Mersey side, and Mondrem on the Nantwich side.

The land was afforested immediately after the Conquest, though the Saxon owner was, for a time, allowed to keep his estate in it. About 1123 Ranulph de Meschines, third Earl of Chester, added to the forest some waste lands and the villa or township of Kingsley, and conferred on Ranulph de Kingsley the forestry rights to be held in grand serjeantry, and gave him a horn in token of his rights as master forester. It is worth noting that the horns of Wirral and Delamere were *both* given, and at the same period, by this third Earl of Chester. But it is important to note that the office of master forester was not altogether paramount. Certain other rights belonged to the families of Grosvenors, Weavers, and Mertons ; and the rights in the two forests were often kept separate and distinct. Finally, however, the whole of the forest rights were vested in the family of Done of Utkinton, and in 1617 James I. came "a-hunting" in the forest of Delamere and knighted John Done, who attended him as *chief forester* and *bow bearer*. Sir John died in 1629, and the male line of Dones came to an end. Through the female line the horn and forest rights descended to the Crewes and Ardernes, and then to the present Earl of Haddington, who married Miss Arderne in 1854.

The horn is a beautiful black colour and strongly curved. It is 14 in. on outside curve, but it is only 5 in. across from mouthpiece to mouth. Its greatest width is 1¾ in. at the mouth, and ¾ in. at the other end. The mouthpiece seems of silver gilt, but there is no sign of the other two

"golden" bands with which pictures and old documents show it was embellished.

Forest of Macclesfield.—The third great forest of Cheshire was that of Macclesfield, which was in existence before Domesday survey.

The office of hereditary master forester of the forests of Leek and Macclesfield was held by the Davenports of Davenport by a grant from Hugh Cyvelioc, Earl of Chester (1160).

Now the original grant, as in the case of Mara and Mondrem, did not prevent subordinate rights being granted, and there were no less than eight sub-foresters who exercised rights down to the sixteenth century.

One of these foresterships belonged to the manor of Taxal, which was held by the Downes of Sutton Downes and Taxal. According to depositions about the year 1720, it is said of Reginald Downes, the then owner:—

"That hee when ye King came a hunting allways rowsed ye stagg, and when ye King came to ye forest Mr. D. held ye King's stirrup and ye L'd Darby held *his* stirrup; and that the L'd Darby, instead of actually holding ye stirrup, put his strop or whip and held it towards ye stirrup while Mr. Downes mounted.

"That the said Mr. Downes had informed this deponent that he held his land by the blast of a horn on Midsummer Day, and paying a pepper-corn yearly; and that once, about 63 or 64 years agoe, this deponent was with the said Mr. Downes when he blowed his horn at Windcather (a range of high hills above Taxal) on that occasion."

Another deposition states that the horn required "three blasts." No special horn seems to have existed.

PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

The hard-headed Cheshireman may be deficient in legend, but he has invented a number of wise sayings and proverbs which can hold their own in quality and quantity with any other county. Some of the oldest,

however, given by Ray, are wrapped in obscurity. The following is a selection :—

"—— by a proverbe certan
Good manners and conynge maken a man."
BRADSHAW (*Life of St. Werburgh*).

[He was a contemporary of William of Wykeham.]

"Cheshire, Chief of men."

"*Stout, bold, and hardy withal, impatient of wrong, and ready to resist the enemy or stranger that shall invade their country.*"—WEBB.

Fuller says: "*Its gentry is remarkable on a fourfold account — their numerousness . . . their antiquity, their loyalty, and their hospitality.*"

"Cheshire for men,
Berkshire for dogs,
Bedfordshire for naked flesh,
And Lincolnshire for bogs."

"By waif, soc and theam,
You may know Cheshire men."

[Powerful in their legal rights and tenacious of them.]

"As many Leighs as fleas, Massies as asses,
Crewes as crows, and Davenports as dogs' tails."

Some of the great Cheshire families.

"There is more than one yew bow in Chester."

As many a Welshman had found out.

"Cheshire born and Cheshire bred,
Strong i' th' arm and weak i' th' yed."

Perhaps invented by neighbours "over the border" who had felt the strong arm.

"To grin like a Cheshire cat."

No satisfactory explanation of this has ever been given. It has formed the subject for inquiries innumerable in "Notes and Queries."
There is another version: "To grin like a Cheshire cat chewing gravel."

"It is better to marry over the mixen than over the moor."

It is better to marry an honest farmer from next door whom you know, than a fine gentleman from a distance who may turn out a fraud."

"Enough and no more, like Mrs. Milton's feast."

Milton married as his third wife Elizabeth Minshull of Wistanstow, near Nantwich, who survived him. She was poor and proud, and her enforced economy was not to the taste of her neighbours.

"When the daughter is stolen, shut the Pepper-gate."

Equivalent to "shutting the stable door when the steed is stolen." This originated in a former Mayor of Chester fastening up the Pepper-gate after his daughter had eloped through it with her lover.

"If thou hadst the rent of Dee Mills—thou wouldst spend it."

These Chester mills yielded annually a large rent.

"As fair as Lady Done."

The wife of Sir John Done, hereditary bow-bearer of Delamere Forest. Pennant, in his "Tour from Chester to London," says that "when a Cheshireman would express supereminent excellency in one of the fair sex, he will say, 'There is a Lady Done for you.'"

"Higgledy Piggledy—Malpas shot."

All share alike.

The well-known anecdote need not be quoted.

"All on one side, like Parkgate."

A single street with one side only, the river being on the other side.

"Every man was not born to be Vicar of Bowdon."

One of the most valuable livings in Cheshire.

"To pull Lymm from Warburton."

Complete and absolute separation.

"Hanged hay never does cattle."

Bought hay, hung and weighed in the scales, is not economical. It will not do (pronounced "doe") cattle.

"To scold like a wych-waller."

I.e., a "salt-boiler" at one of the wyches of Cheshire.

"To catch a person napping, as Moss caught his mare."

"I'll tell thee, quoth Wood,
If I can't rule my daughter, I'll rule my good."

"But when? quoth Kettle to his mare."

Of these three worthies history is silent.

"Like Goodyer's pig, never well but when he is doing mischief."

"He stands like Mumphazard, who was hanged for saying nothing."

"Like the parson of Saddleworth who could read no book but his own."

"Roint you witch! as Bessy Locket said to her mother."

"No more sib (akin) than sieve and riddle that grew in a wood together."

"If he were as long as a lither, he might thatch a house without a ladder."

"It would make a dog doff his doublet."

"She hath broken her elbow at the Church door."

A woman grown idle after marriage.

"Score twice before you cut once."

Used by curriers. Holmes' "Academie of Armourie."

Don't cut your leather until you feel sure you have selected the right place.

"Stoppord law, no stake no draw."

Stockport or Stopport—only those who contribute to an undertaking may reap benefit from it.

"You may know a Mobberley man by his breeches."

An allusion to poachers in the neighbouring Tatton Park. They made their breeches of buckskin.

"The Mayor of Altrincham lies in bed while his breeches are mending."

"The Mayor of Altrincham, and the Mayor of Over,
The one is a thatcher, the other a dauber."

These places were small and unimportant, and the mayors were therefore sometimes chosen from men in humble ranks of life.

"A Stopport (Stockport) chaise."

Two women riding sideways on one horse.

"As thrunk as three in a bed."

Thrunk = crowded.

"It is time to yoke when the cart comes to the caples."

"*In some part of England they call a horse a caple.*"—CHAUCER. Latin = *Caballus.*

"Good to fetch a rich man sorrow and a dead man woe."

"As much wit as three folks—two fools and a madman.'

"She hath been to London to call a strea a straw, and a waw a wall."

Adopting the London pronunciation and forgetting, or being ashamed of, the county dialect.

"To come home like the parson's cow, with a calf at her foot."

"To look a strained hair in a can."

"To shed riners with a whaver."

"*To surpass anything skilful or adroit by something still more so.*"—WILBRAHAM. *Riner = a toucher used at quoits.*

"Too-Too will in two."

Strain a thing too much and it will not hold.

"Well, well, is a word of malice."

"You been like Smithwick, either clemed or bossten."

Too little or too much.

"Afraid of far enough."
"Afraid of him that died last year."

Of that which is never likely to happen.

LOCAL RHYMES

Holt liars, Farndon bears,
Churton greyhounds, Aldford hares.

In Stoak there are but few good folk,
In Stanney—hardly any.

Gobbinshire, Gobbinshire from Gobbinshire Green,
The ronkest oud beggar as ever was seen.

Gobbinshire was a name of the lower portion of the Wirral peninsula.

Sir Randle Crewe, the Lord of this manor,
Was born in Nantwich, the son of a Tanner.

Middlewych is a pretty toun
Seated in a valley,
With a Church and Market Cross
And eke a bouling alley;
All the men are loyal there,
Pretty girls are plenty,
Church and King, and doun with the Rump
There's not such a toun in twenty.

—*Cavalier Ballad.*

"Congleton rare, where they sold the Bible to buy a bear."

The inhabitants once laid by money for a new Bible, but the town bear having died, they devoted their savings to buying a new bear for baiting.

When the Chester and Birkenhead railway was made, the name of Ledsham was given to a station which was nearest to Sutton, and this gave rise to the following:—

"I want to go to Sutton please."
"There aren't no Sutton *now*."
"It's taken t'name o' Ledsham, sir."
"For an estate? or how?"

SUNDRY SAWS

Farm servants dissatisfied say:—

Maily bread an maily pies,
Skim Dick full o' eyes,
Buttermilk astid o' beer,
I'm sartin I shanna stop here.

(*South Cheshire.*)

Come aw ye buttermilk sellers that have buttermilk to sell,
Ah'd have ye give good mizzer, and scrub yo'r vessels well ;
For there's a day o' reckoning, an hell will have its share,
An' the devil will have you nappers as Mossy ketched his mare.

"Go fiddle for shives (slices of food)
Amongst old wives."
Said in contempt.

"Laus-a-dees
What times be these."

"Stare-agog, stare agog
Tumbled o'er the tatoe-hog."

Children irritate bulls by shouting :—

"Billy Billy Belder
Sucked the cai's elder" (udder).

PHENOMENA

Dee's valley mild till close of year
Means three months cold in store, I fear.

THE MOON.

When hoo fulls at ye midnight, or soone after that,
In ye sommer, great heat,
In ye winter, hard frost.
When hoo fulls at ye midday, or soone after that,
Winter cries, "O ye rain,"
Summer says, "Cheshire's lost."
—*Old Cheshire Household Book*, 1675–85.
(*Hoo* is the old English "she.")

A winde from Sandbach in the Easte
Blows good to neither man nor beast.

Malpas ales and Malpas gales
Cheer the farmer, fill his pails.

Whenever Chester chimes at Congleton do sound
A flood, like Noah's, will wash away ye ground.
The towns are thirty miles apart.

It rains, it pains, it patters i' the docks,
Mobberley wenches are weshin' their smocks.

As long as Helsby (hill) wears a hood,
The weather's never very good.

If Wednesday, Thursday, or if Friday
Happen this year to be May day,
Then begin some harmless thing
And it will thee much credit bring.
—RANDLE HOLME, *Harleian MSS.*

LEGENDS

The Celtic legend already alluded to comes from Alderley Edge. It is a version of *Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.*

A farmer going through Alderley Edge, on his way to the fair to sell a beautiful white mare, was accosted by a venerable old man dressed as a monk, who said:

"Sell as thou wilt that steed of thine
'Tis fated that the steed be mine."

The farmer found no purchaser, and, returning at night, met the monk by two enormous iron gates, through which they entered into a huge cavern where numbers of milk-white steeds were stalled, and by each lay an armed warrior asleep. The wizard paid the farmer, who asked the meaning of the mysterious troopers, and was told that they would, when England

"Was thrice lost and thrice won
'Twixt dawn of day and setting sun,"

come to her aid.

When the wizard ceased, the farmer found himself alone on the hill, and the gates closed behind him.

A dragon legend is connected with Thomas Venables, son of Sir Gilbert Venables, cousin-german to William the Conqueror:—

"It chaunced a terrible dragon to remayne and make his abode in the lordeshippe of Moston in the Countye of Chester, wheare he devoured all such persons as he laid hold on, which ye said Thomas Venables herringe tell of . . . dyd in his awne person valiantly set on the saide dragon, where first he shotte hym throwe with an arrowe, and afterward with other weapons manfullie slew him, at which instant the dragon was devouringe of a childe."

A greater fund of legendary lore is found with regard to the lakes or meres of Cheshire:—

BRERETON—BAG OR BLACK MERE.

"Here is one exceeding strange, but attested in my hearing by many persons, and commonly believed. Before any heir of this (Brereton) family dies, there are seen in a lake adjoining, the bodies of trees swimming upon the water for several days together."—CAMDEN.

Sir Philip Sidney, in *Seven Wonders of England*, says:—

> "The Breretons have a lake, which, when the sun
> Approaching warms (not else) dead logs up sends
> From hideous depth, which tribute when it ends
> Sure sign it is the Lord's last thread is spun."

CAPESTHORN—RUDESMERE, OR REEDSMERE.

In the grounds of Capesthorne is a fine sheet of water called Reedsmere, containing a floating island about 1½ acres in size, which in strong winds is blown here and there. A country legend accounts for this floating island by a story that a certain knight was jealous of his lady-love, and vowed not to look upon her face until the island moved on the face of the mere. But he fell sick, and was nigh to death, when he was nursed back to health by the lady, to reward whose constancy a tremendous hurricane tore the island up by the roots.

ROSTHERNE MERE.

"All kinds of legends are current about Rostherne, as is the case with most lakes which are reported to be deep. One is, that a mermaid comes up on Easter Day and rings a bell; another, that it communicates with the Irish Channel by a subterranean passage; another, that it once formed with Tabley, Tatton, Mere, and other lakes, a vast sheet of water that covered the country between Alderley Edge and High Leigh."—HOPE, *Holy Wells and Traditions*.

COMBERMERE

Has also a bell legend.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

BELLS.

The Curfew is still tolled at nine o'clock at Chester Cathedral, and the big bell used to be tolled whenever the Dean or Bishop was going to preach, but this has been discontinued. "Curfew" is tolled at many of the country churches, sometimes throughout the year, and sometimes only at harvest-time.

At Frodsham Church a small bell, which stood over the chancel arch, was called the "Dag-tale" bell, or "day-telling" bell—probably from being used to denote the hours of the day to those working in the fields. At Holmes Chapel, in the parish of Sandbach, there is an entry in 1723 for "bell ropes to Dag-tail 12s."

The "Pancake" bell is still rung at Congleton on Shrove Tuesday at 11 A.M., and at Tarvin; and at Barthomley and other places it was called by the expressive name of the "Guttit" bell.

Ray says:—

> "At Nantwich they have a custom like that in Scotland; when anyone is dead a Bellman goeth about the streets in the morning that the dead person is to be buried, tinkling a bell he has in his hand, and now and then makes a stand and invites the people to come to the funeral at such an hour."

Prebendary Garencieres of Chester Cathedral, in his will of 1703, says:—

> "I would have no other invitation to my funeral than by notice given by the Clerk to the parishioners of Handley and Waverton, and by the Belman to the people of Chester, of the time when, and the place where my corps is to be buried."

Congleton still preserves three ancient leather belts, on which are strung a number of metal bells with rolling clappers. Two belts have seven, and one has five, and each bell has a different tone. They are said to have been worn by three church officials on the Congleton "Wake" day, the Feast of St. Peter *ad vincula*, or "St. Peter in Chains." At midnight of that day three acolytes

ran round the town summoning the people to church, thereby representing the clanking of chains. About one hundred years ago the bells fell into the hands of a family of chimney-sweeps, but were ultimately seized and preserved by the town authorities. They are unique.

The following is a Cheshire distich on bells:—

> Higher Peover kettles, Lower Peover pans,
> Knutsford sweet music, and Rostherne great drones.

BIRDS.

Two cocks answer one another:—

1. "Cocky Keeko!
   The women been master here."
2. "Cocky Keeko!
   It's the same everywhere."

(*South Cheshire.*)

The "Golden Plover" is called "The Sheep's Guide" by the Longdendale shepherds, who say the bird's note warns the sheep of danger.

It is considered bad luck to take the eggs of, or to kill the Robin, Wren, Spotted Fly-catcher, and Swallow, hence the following:—

> The Martin and the Swallow
> Are God's Mate and Marrow,

or,

"Are God Almighty's birds to hollow" (= to *hallow* or *keep holy*).

Eggs of game-fowl are placed in Magpies' nests to be hatched, in order to make the game-cocks fight better.

The calling of a green Woodpecker indicates rain.

The name of "Boggarts muck" is given to Owl pellets, the idea being that the small bones therein are those of fairies eaten by boggarts.

The Cuckoo was called "The Welsh ambassador" in Cheshire, because this herald of spring was generally heard first on the Welsh border.

GAMES

Randle Holme gives an entertaining list of children's games in the Stuart period, nearly all of which are now obsolete. He does not mention one which is more popular in Cheshire than the Southern Counties. This is the game in which a horse chestnut is threaded on a string and struck at with chestnuts similarly threaded. The chestnut is called a "coppity-co":—

"Coppity-co,
My first blow"

is the rhyme used. The word is now softened into cobbity-co (so in *Shropshire*) and even into comity-co (*Chester*, 1909).

"Cobbity-cuts
Put dain your nuts."
(*South Cheshire.*)

Cop is old English for *top* or *head*.[1] Somnolent churchgoers in olden times had reason to remember this fact.

Paid Richard Pennington for whiping dogs and cobing sleeping folke £0 10 0
(*Bunbury Church Accounts.*)

A similar official at Tarvin was familiarly known as "The Cobber," and at Tarporley as "The Awakener."[2]

Another curious game is "Dot." Children move in a ring round one representing "Dot," and sing:—

"Dun yo', wot 'oo were Dot?
He were not a bad lot;
Whereabouts was his cot,
Oi'n furgotten to jot."
(*North Cheshire and Malpas.*)

At this point "Dot" puts his hand out, and the one touched has to take his place. This is practically a "counting-out

[1] So at Chester, the top of the river bank is called "The Cop," and a "cop-hedge" is, in Cheshire, a bank with a hedge on top of it.

[2] The following anecdote, which is vouched for, is too good to omit:—At a certain Cheshire church, where the farmers slumbered peacefully during the afternoon sermon, the incumbent was surprised on a certain Sunday to see the farmers, one after another, waking up suddenly and vigorously rubbing

rhyme," and there seems every probability that it is a very ancient one.

The Manor of Edge, in the Hundred of Broxton, was held, according to *Domesday Survey*, by Edwin, a Saxon thane, who, although he was compelled to become tenant to Norman Robert FitzHugh, managed to retain for himself the two Edges. Contemporary with him was Dot, the Saxon lord of sixteen manors, some of them conjointly with Edwin; but, more unlucky than he, Dot lost all his manors and fled to Wales. His grandson, Cadwgan Dot, was father of Hova Dot or Dod, from whom the Edge and Broxton Dods claim lineal descent.

The following are additional "counting-out" specimens:—

Orcum, Borcum,
Boni, Corkum,
Ericum, Bericum, bo-ni-bus.
O.U.T. spells out.

(*Chester.*)

One, two,
Sky-blue;
All in
But you.

(*Chester*, 1904.)

MUSIC

Although Cheshire cannot be described as a musical county, yet it has no reason to be ashamed of its past musical history.

"Cheshire Rounds" was a celebrated tune and dance—sometimes danced by a couple (whose gyrations resembled the movements of the sun and moon) and sometimes by a single person. The only known portrait of Doggett (who founded the celebrated waterman's badge) shows him dancing the "Cheshire Round."

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their faces. At last, looking up in a gallery to the left of the pulpit, he saw a boy with a pea-shooter, and at once discerned the cause of the commotion. He shook his fist at the lad, but to no effect, and at last cried out, "Young man, desist!" but the boy, bent on his work, replied, "Never thee mind! get along with thy sermon; I'll keep the beggars awaken for thee!"

Miss Stanley writes from Alderley Park—

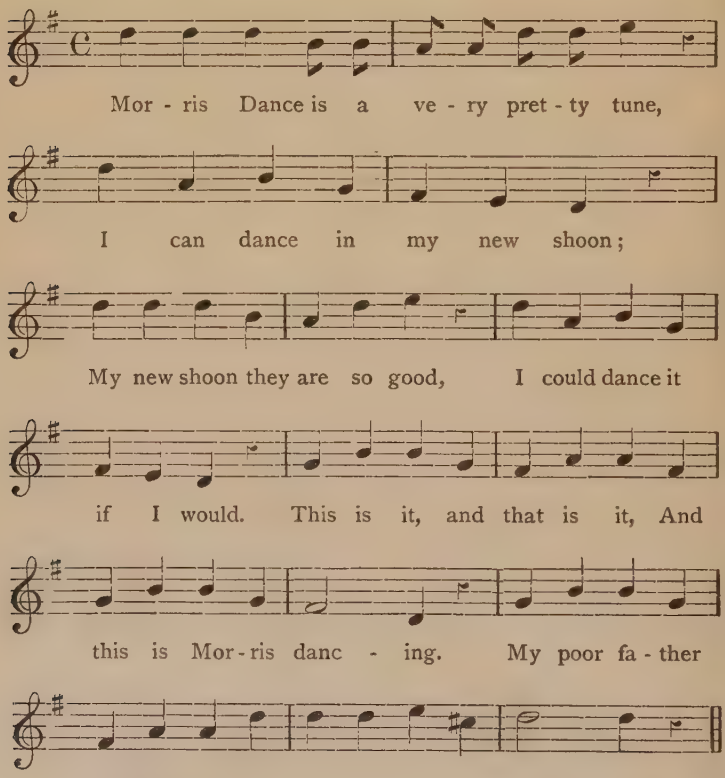
Sep. 8, 1798.

We had yesterday what is generally called a harvest home supper, but *here* a "shutting." Old Peter danced the Cheshire Round on the table after supper with Charlotte Alcock, one of the women.

A play-bill of the time of William III. shows how popular the dance was then—

In Bartholomew Fair, at the Coach-house, on the pav'd stones at Hosier Lane end, you will see a Black that dances the *Cheshire Rounds* to perfection.

The Morris Dance has always been a favourite, especially in the Knutsford district, where it was danced to the following :—


Mor - ris Dance is a ve - ry pret - ty tune,
I can dance in my new shoon;
My new shoon they are so good, I could dance it
if I would. This is it, and that is it, And
this is Mor - ris danc - ing. My poor fa - ther
broke his leg, And so it fell a chanc - ing.

Just over the border, in Lancashire, the version runs—

My new shoon, they are so good,
I could dance Morris if I would;
And if hat and sark be drest
I will dance Morris with the rest.

Three ballads were very popular, viz. "The Miller of the Dee," "The Spanish Lady" (who is supposed to have fallen in love with the Cheshire knight Sir Uryan Leigh), and "The Cheshire Cheese."

CHURCHES

The old parish account-books show that much more was spent on music in old times than in the present day, *e.g.* *Bunbury*:—

1762.	For a bassoon	£5	5	0
1787.	John Richardson, for instructing the singers .	8	17	0
1801.	For a hautboy	0	14	0
1811.	For a base violin	6	16	7
1820.	Paid Mr. Cotgreave, for leading the singers, 62 nights at 5s.	15	10	0
1821.	Do. do. 77 nights at 5s. .	19	5	0

In 1785, at Farndon, we find—

To a vestry meeting about a bassoon . . .	£0	2	6
To a bassoon	6	0	8

Two new "cleronets" and reeds cost £5. 12s. 9d., and a new hautboy £1. 8s.

At the same vestry the churchwarden was empowered to pay £1. 1s. yearly to the singers "so long as they continue to sing such tunes as the inhabitants of the parish shall approve of"; and William Snelson was paid two guineas per annum "to teach the children to sing psalms in church." . . .

The abolition of the old church band has *not* been of benefit to many churches and villages.

Passing mention must be made of Handel's visit to Chester, in 1741, when he tried over the music of the "Messiah" before its first performance in Dublin, and of

the great Chester Musical Festivals held at various intervals from 1772 to 1829, and of the celebrated political song called the "Glorious Sixth of May," which stirred Chester like a second "Lillibulero," just one hundred years ago.

WELLS

A wishing well, called "Billy Hobby's Well," was in the field which is now the Grosvenor Park, Chester, and a local poet sang thus in 1823—

> I lov'd the tales that idle maids would tell,
> Of wonders wrought at Billy Hobby's well;
> Where love-sick girls with leg immured would stand,
> The right leg 'twas—the other on dry land,
> With face so simple—stocking in the hand—
> Wishing for husbands half a winter's day,
> With ninety times the zeal they used to pray.

Other wells round Chester were "St. Giles' Well" at Spital Boughton, "Jacob's Well" near St. John's Church, "Aganippe's Well" at Newton, and the "Abbot's Well" at Christleton, which supplied the monastery at Chester with water. It still exists, but the others are extinct.

Another wishing well was at Gayton, and a holy well at Alderley Edge. St. Plegmund's Well is in the parish of Plemstall (three miles from Chester). It has been customary for many years to take the water used for christenings in the church from this well.

A chalybeate spring existed in Delamere Forest, and was resorted to by invalids in the eighteenth century.

The largest well now existing is the "Synagogue Well" at Frodsham, which is close to the site of the ancient castle there, and may have been connected with it. It still has a copious supply of water, and has been cleansed and repaired, much to the detriment of its former picturesque appearance.

There is no history attached to it nor any explanation of the curious name. Major Egerton Leigh gives a fancy history of it in his *Ballads and Legends of Cheshire*.

No traces of well-worship exist; but up to a late period the inhabitants of Nantwich used to sing a hymn of thanksgiving at the "Blessing of the Brine." An ancient pit, called the "Old Brine" or "Biat," was decked on Ascension Day with flowers, and a jovial band of young people celebrated the day with song and dance. Aubrey says: "In Cheshire, where they went in perambulation, they did blesse the springs—*i.e.* did read the Gospel at them, and did believe the water was better."

A remnant of *fire-worship* existed at Alvanley, where, on the Toot Hill, fires were made in the spring and autumn, through which the villagers jumped.

ROBERT NIXON

Mention must be made of Robert Nixon, the great Cheshire prophet, whose fame not only rivalled that of Mother Shipton, but may be said (seeing that he is mentioned in *Pickwick*) to have lasted longer. The earliest history is Oldmixon's, published in 1714, which says that "in the reign of James I. there lived a fool whose name was Nixon," and that Thomas Cholmondley of Vale Royal (d. 1652) "took him into his house, where he lived when he composed this prophecy." But other writers place him at a much earlier period. His prophecies really fall into the two periods of civil war, viz. the Wars of the Roses, and the Great Rebellion. If, therefore, Nixon was a real personage, it is obvious that if he lived in the reign of James I. he cannot have uttered some of the prophecies attributed to him. The discovery of an "Irish Analogue of Nixon's Prophecy" (*Notes and Queries*, October 21, 1865) throws great doubt on the whole matter. The subject still requires much investigation.

The following are a few of Nixon's prophecies :—

> When an eagle shall sit on the top of Vale-Royal House,
> Then an heir shall be born, who shall live to see great
> troubles in England.

It is said that the Cholmondley family was at this time nearly extinct, but in due course an heir was born, during which time an eagle perched on the house-top.

Between a rick and two trees
A famous battle shall be.

The "rick and two trees" may be Warwick, Coventry, and Daventry, and the battle, Edgehill, 1642; or Rickmansworth, Elstree, and Edwinstree, and the battle the second fought at St. Alban's, 1461.

The following is unintelligible:—

There will be three gates to London of imprisoned men for Cowsters. Then, if you have three cows, at the first gate sell one, and keep thee at home. At the second gate sell the other two, and keep thee at home. At the last gate all shall be done.

Old Mab's Curse is directed against any one of the Minshull family who shall sell the family acres—

Mabel's dole, of pious fame
From royal blood they say she came;
Poor and needy folks do tell
That Mynshull's land no one dare sell,
For Old Mab's curse on him would light
That ere should sell land, stone, or bight.

The belief that bees must be told of their master's death is widely spread, also that a winter crop of primroses betokens a death in the house. Powdered alabaster is considered a good remedy for the ailments of sheep, and the beautiful tomb of Sir Hugh Calveley in Bunbury Church has, in consequence, it is said, suffered much mutilation.

We find Trowle, the shepherd boy in the Chester play, making much of his tar-box as a specific, for the diseases of sheep and cattle were serious matters for an agricultural people, as the following show:—

Paid for a book concerning ye disorders of cattle . . £0 1 0[1]

[1] Bunbury Church Accounts.

and in the accounts of St. John's Church, Chester, the following occurs five times in 1747:—

Paid for a book about the horned cattle . . . £0 0 8

One other point remains to be noticed. There is a widely-spread belief that the indentures of apprentices in Chester contained a clause stipulating that they should not be compelled to eat salmon more than three days in each week. No such indenture has ever been seen, and the late Mr. Frank Buckland offered, in vain, a reward of five pounds for the sight of such a document. The tradition exists wherever there is a salmon river, but investigation shows that it is without foundation.

Such is some of the folk-lore of Cheshire, and there may still be a great deal which has never yet been recorded. It behoves every one to use his utmost endeavours to put into print every song, legend, saying, or custom that he may meet with. Such relics of the past can only now be obtained from aged people, and in a few years this source will fail, and the rising "school-board" generation will neither know nor care for such things. It is well to remember also (to quote another Cheshire proverb) that "the unlikeliest places are often likelier than those which are likeliest."

It has been impossible to give all references, but especial mention must be made of Hazlitt's and Ray's *Proverbs*, Mr. Robert Holland's various papers, *The Cheshire Sheaf*, and some *Bird Notes* of Mr. T. A. Coward.

TWO CHESHIRE SAINTS

By the Archdeacon of Chester

WE are justified in giving this title to St. Werburgh and St. Plegmund, of whom specially this chapter will treat, since both belonged to the old kingdom of Mercia, of which Cheshire was a part.

We owe our knowledge of St. Werburgh to the metrical life of the Saint written by Henry Bradshaw, a monk of St. Werburgh's Monastery, who died in 1513. The full title of his work (which was printed in 1521 and reprinted by the Chetham Society in 1848) is *The Holy Lyfe and History of Saynt Werburge, very frutefall for all Christen people to rede.* It purports to be a translation into English verse from the original Chronicle or Passionary stated by him to be preserved in the Monastery. He makes frequent allusions to the Venerable Bede (whom he styles his author), as also to "Master Alfrydus, William Malmsburge, Gyrarde, Polycronycon, and other mo(re)."

St. Werburgh was born about 650, and was the daughter of Wulfhere, King of Mercia (whose name is perpetuated in Wolverhampton) and Ermenhild his wife. She was thus descended from four royal families. Her father was the second son of Penda, King of Mercia, who claimed descent from Woden. Her mother was the daughter of Earconbert, King of Kent, and was thus a descendant both of Tytillus, King of East Anglia, and of St. Edwin, King of Northumbria. She was also connected with the kings of France, as St. Ermenhild's grandfather and great-grandfather both married princesses of that royal house. We may say that she was of saintly as well as of royal lineage, for five of her grand-

father Penda's children (pagan though he himself was) earned the title of saints; whilst her mother's family included the names of St. Hilda, St. Etheldreda, St. Ethelburga, and St. Sexburga (her mother).

Wulfhere and his queen chiefly lived at Stone in Staffordshire, where St. Werburgh, under the care of her good mother, grew up. Bradshaw gives a very interesting picture of her early years, in which her religious disposition, fostered no doubt by her mother's influence and example, manifested itself in various ways. Thus :—

> "First in the morning to church she would go,
> Following her mother the queene every day,
> With her boke and bedes, and depart not them fro,
> Hear all divine service and her devocyons say:
> And to our Blessed Saviour, mekely on her knees pray,
> Daily Him desiring, for His endless grace and pity,
> To keep her from sin, and preserve her in chastity."

She was an only daughter having three brothers. She listened with earnest attention to every word of instruction and advice; abjured giddy pleasures; and found her truest joy in contemplation of heavenly things, and holiest bliss arising from a pure conscience, chastened by fasting and sanctified by prayer.

Bradshaw gives a full description of her young days, and fondly lingers over the narration of her virtues. She attracted many suitors, but courteously dismissed them all. Among these was the Prince of the West Saxons, who made offer of marriage and of all his worldly goods :—

> "Landes, rentes, and libertees all at your pleasure;
> Servantes every hour, your byddynge for to do,
> With ladyes in your chambre to wayte on you also."

She gently but firmly declines, saying :—

> "But now I shewe you playnly my true mynde,
> My purpose was never maryed for to be;
> A lorde I have chosen, Redeemer of Mankynde
> Jhesu the Second Persone in Trynyte
> To be my Spouse."

The suit of Warbode, a powerful knight and chief steward in her father's household, was attended with disastrous results. He had gained an evil influence over King Wulfhere, and induced him, if not to become an actual apostate, to adopt a distinctly hostile attitude to Christianity. When his suit, though favoured by his master, is declined by St. Werburgh, he retires in wrath and plots revenge. He poisons the King's mind, and persuades him that his sons Wulfade and Ruffyn are plotting against him, leads him into the forest, where they are found in St. Chad's cell being instructed by the good Bishop in the Christian faith; and then in his blind rage the King slays them both, and rushes back to his castle. No sooner did he return than he was seized with sore pains, the mark of God's vengeance. Stung with remorse, he repented of his apostasy; repaired to St. Chad; professed his contrition; promised to destroy all idols and temples in his realm and to build monasteries; and founded the Abbey of Peterborough and a priory at Stone—

"To the honour of God, and these martyrs twayne."

And now St. Werburgh begs her father to be allowed to become "a religious," and to enter the Abbey of Ely, where her great-aunt, St. Etheldreda (or Awdry) was the Abbess. Wulfhere is reluctant and slow to consent, but at length he yields; and, when the matter was once settled, does his part nobly.

After her year of probation, St. Werburgh made her holy profession with great solemnity, and her biographer holds her up to the women of his day as an example of virtue and humility.

On the death of Wulfhere, his widow, Ermenhild, herself repaired to the convent of Ely, where her mother, St. Sexburga, had succeeded her sister, St. Etheldreda, as Abbess, and vied with her daughter in piety and devotion. Wulfhere was succeeded as king by his brother, Ethelred, to whom, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, is due the

building in 689 of the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Chester. Ethelred fully appreciated his niece's character, and, seeing her holy conversation, made her Lady and President at Weedon, Trentham, and Hanbury, thus making her ruler of the nuns within his realm. He himself also took the vows and became a monk, resigning the crown to his nephew, Cenred, St. Werburgh's brother, who, after a short reign of five years, followed his uncle's example; went to Rome the year of grace 708, and was "professed to Saint Benette's religion," and "frome this lyfe transitory, with vertu departed to eternal glory."

Bradshaw goes on to describe "the gostly devocion of Saynt Werburge, and vertuous governans of her places," and, if the chronicler is to be trusted, she showed a marvellous capacity for ruling her abbeys. Her behaviour and character is thus described :—

> "She was a minister rather than a mistress,
> Her great pre-eminence caused no presumpcion,
> Serving her systers with humble subjection.
> . . . . . .
> Piteous and merciful and full of charity
> To the poor people in their necessity.
> . . . . . .
> She never commanded systers to do anything
> But it was fulfilled in her own doing."

Even from these short extracts we can readily gather what a gentle, lovable personage she must have been, and how in all her relations of life she manifested a truly humble and Christian spirit. Her life was mainly spent between Weedon, Trentham, Repton, and Hanbury, and we can imagine what a gracious influence she exercised upon the religious houses there and their occupants, and so upon the surrounding neighbourhoods. It was at Trentham that she died, enjoining, however, that her body should rest at Hanbury. When she felt her end approaching she gave directions as to her successors and officers in the monasteries, and as to how their affairs should be conducted in the future; then, calling the sisters round her, she gave them her last

exhortation, to live in temperance, obedience, and love, recited the Creed, received the Blessed Sacrament, and—

> "The third day of February ye may be sure,
> Expired from this life, caduce and transitory,
> To eternal blyss, coronate with victory,
> Changing her lyfe, miserable and thrall,
> For infinite joy, and glory eternal."

This was probably in the year 699. The people of Trentham buried her in that place, watching over the body lest it should be removed. However, the people of Hanbury came, and, a deep sleep having fallen upon the watchers, were enabled to carry the body safely to Hanbury, where it was interred in the chancel. Nine years afterwards, in the summer of 708, it was moved from the grave to a duly prepared shrine with great pomp, in the presence of her cousin King Ceolred and the bishops and the clergy. Here, says the chronicler, the body remained whole and substantial "for nearly 200 years, till the coming of the pagan Danes," when "it was resolved and fell to powder lest the wicked miscreants with impious hands should dare to touch it."

It was in 875, to save the remains from such violation, that the people of Hanbury were inspired to bring them to Chester, as the Danes, having destroyed Weedon and Trentham, had come as far as Repton. It was then that—

> "The relique, the Shryne full memorative,
> Was brought to Chestre for our consolacion,
> Reverently receyved, set with devocion
> In the mouther Church of Saint Peter and Paule
> (As afore is sayd) a place most principall."

A full description is given of the solemn reception of the shrine and its treasured contents, and also of the gifts wherewith rich and poor vied with each other to enrich it.[1] The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul was probably somewhere on the site of the present cathedral. Ethelfreda,

[1] According to the Ely Book (*Liber Eliensis*) the relics were brought to the Abbey of Ely (Wall's *Shrines of British Saints*). Certain portions of them may have been carried to either place, or there may be some confusion as to the name.

daughter of King Alfred, built a separate minster to St. Werburgh, joining it to the east end of the older church. This building (rebuilt, we are told, by Leofric, Earl of Chester) gave place to the Norman structure of Hugh Lupus, in the erection of which he was assisted by the advice of St. Anselm. But through all these changes and vicissitudes the name of St. Werburgh was associated with the dedication of the church, and her shrine found its home there.

The shrine was no doubt visited by pilgrims from all parts, and as time went on was adorned and beautified. The shrine proper was a box or receptacle in which the relics of the saint were deposited, and was often made of the most splendid and costly materials, and enriched with jewels in profusion.

Bradshaw speaks of this portable shrine as "a riall relique" (royal relic), and also tells of the "many riall gyftes of jewels to the shrine." It was carried about in processions and in times of danger and emergency, and was "set on the towne walles for help and tuicion"; to save Chester from the attacks of the Welsh; and again,

> "The devout Chanons sette the holy Shryne
> Agaynst their enemies at the sayd Northgate,"

"when innumerable barbarik nations purposed to disstroye and spoyle the city." Similarly we are told "howe in 1180 a great fire, like to destroye all Chestre, by myracle ceased when the holy shryne was borne about the towne by the monkes." As various miracles were ascribed to her agency in her lifetime, so now her relics were regarded as powerful instruments in warding off evil whether from individuals or the community at large. The shrine would be visited by suppliants from every quarter, who would invoke the aid of the Saint to remedy their various ills. For the portable shrine a suitable resting-place would be erected, one probably giving place to another as successive generations altered the style and character of the building. Round this stately and elaborate structure would be places where

the suppliants could kneel, and also receptacles for the offerings which their piety and gratitude inspired. Of the earlier structures no trace remains, but the fifteenth century one has in recent years been placed at the west end of the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral, as being probably near the spot where it originally stood. At the foundation of the See, and up till 1870, the lower portion formed the base of the Bishop's Throne, the crown being lowered so as to form the balustrade in front of the Bishop's seat. In this adaptation certain stones were removed, and were built up in the wall which enclosed the staircase which led from the Bishop's study directly into the Cathedral. In removing this staircase in 1885 these stones were discovered, and have again been placed on the shrine, which is thus restored to its original proportions. The shrine was adorned with canopied niches, in which were sculptured figures bearing their names on scrolls, representing the Kings and Saints of the Mercian kingdom.

It will be gathered from what has been said that though Saint Werburgh probably spent no portion of her life in Cheshire, yet she was for more than seven hundred years associated in men's minds with the county, inasmuch as her shrine had its home in Chester. In those days she would be looked upon as a Cheshire Saint, and from far and near religious pilgrims would come to say their devotions and to tender their offerings at her shrine in the Church which was dedicated to God's service in her name. We are therefore justified in speaking of her under this heading. And she has left her name in the county in other ways. Nine churches in England (six of them in the old kingdom of Mercia) are dedicated in her name. One of these is in Cheshire at Warburton, *Werburgh town.* That place gave its name to an honoured Cheshire family, which has given its scions to the service of their country in many directions, and which still holds a position of high renown and esteem in the county. We may thus legitimately term St. Werburgh a Cheshire Saint. We cannot do better than follow her

favourite precept and common saying: "Please God and love Him, and doubt not anything."

The other subject of our paper is St. Plegmund, to many perhaps an unknown name, though he rose to a high position, and must have exercised a wide and beneficent influence on Church and State both in his own day and for succeeding generations. He, like St. Werburgh, was a native of Mercia, though we cannot give his birthplace or his parentage. But we can connect him very closely with the county and with the neighbourhood of Chester, where his name is still preserved in the name of a parish, that of Plemstall. This has been variously written at different times, as Plegmundstall, Plegmondesham, &c. It was here, in fact, that he established himself as a hermit in an Isle of Chester; for though Plemstall is no longer an island, it has been clearly shown that in earlier times the locality would justify such description.

Plegmund was born in troublous times about the middle of the ninth century. The Danes had overrun the land, destroyed the monasteries, the only places of learning, and driven the monks from their books. Some there were, however, who determined, in spite of all difficulties, to pursue their studies and to pray in solitude for better times, and of these Plegmund was one. He had very probably been a monk, though this cannot be said with certainty. At any rate he adopted the hermit's life, and set up his stall or habitation at Plemstall, then doubtless an island amid fens and marshes, and by its situation affording a place of safety in times of disorder and unrest. His lonely dwelling, of which no trace remains, may have been on the site of the present church or a short distance away, and nearer to the well which still bears his name. Here he lived the hermit's life; but we must remember, as Dean Hook tells us, that a hermit was not an anchorite. The latter never quitted his cell, but was an absolute recluse. The hermit was a more independent character; he moved about as occasion demanded. If he had a settled abode he would go to places

of resort near at hand, and by his preaching seek to benefit the wayfarers who might be passing by.

We can imagine therefore St. Plegmund paying his frequent visits to the neighbouring city, only three or four miles distant, taking up his position at one or other of its gates (for it was surrounded by its Roman walls, and though then "waste" must have had some inhabitants), and instructing out of his laboriously-acquired learning those who were willing to pause and listen to his discourse. The anxious inquirer might return with him to his island home and, after further preparation as a catechumen, receive the grace of Holy Baptism at the well above referred to. His supply of books or manuscripts would be but small. The Bible of course was his constant companion, and it has been suggested with confidence that Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* would certainly be one of his treasures. This treatise was afterwards translated by King Alfred, a task in which Plegmund may have helped him. There is in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a copy (the oldest in existence) of the Saxon Chronicle, said to have been translated by Plegmund, for which assertion there is internal evidence of an indirect nature. This, however, was probably done after he left this neighbourhood; but the fact may be taken as showing what his powers were, and what a diligent student he must have been, especially when we consider the scanty materials which would be at his service. He must have acquired some reputation for his learning, and his fame reached the ears of King Alfred, who sent for him to his Court to act as his adult tutor. There he would find Grimbald, Werefrid, Asser, and others, and with them would be associated with the monarch in the promotion of learning and in furthering the best interests of the nation.

We speak of the king as "Alfred the Great," but then he was known as "England's Darling." Alfred came to the crown in 872, and died in 900. How soon after his accession he summoned Plegmund to his side to be his tutor and instructor we cannot say, but that the relations

between them were very close and intimate and mutually advantageous, we can have no doubt. In the year 890 the see of Canterbury was vacant, and, having been declined by Grimbald, was offered by the King to Plegmund, a step which was received with general approbation, for the entry in the Saxon Chronicle runs thus: "This year 890 Plegmund was chosen of God and of all the people Archbishop of Canterbury." Plegmund was consecrated at Rome by Pope Formosus, but as some doubt and discredit was thrown upon the actions of this pontiff, he paid a second visit to Rome, and was re-consecrated by Pope Stephen, thus submitting to a rite of more than questionable propriety. He cordially seconded the King in his endeavours to establish a learned priesthood. Some justification has been alleged for the fact that several sees and posts were for a time kept vacant, in the consideration that men of sufficient learning and education were not to be found for them. At anyrate Plegmund, scholar and theologian as he was, did all that lay in his power to remove the reproach which was fastening upon the Church that it had an ignorant and illiterate clergy.

In conjunction with the King, he published *The Pastoral Care* of Gregory the Great, a copy of which was sent to every English bishop, with a noteworthy preface from the King himself, in which the sovereign acknowledged what he had "learned of Plegmund my Archbishop, and of Asser my bishop, and of Grimbald my presbyter, and of John my presbyter." It is interesting to know that the copy addressed to Plegmund is still preserved, as well as those addressed to the Bishops of Worcester and Sherborne. It is reasonable to conclude from this that Alfred would find in *his* Archbishop a zealous assistant in all his efforts to promote sound and religious learning, and that the two would heartily co-operate in endeavours to secure an educated clergy. Whether he ever visited the scene of his former labours, it is impossible to say; but the late Mr. Thomas Hughes, F.S.A., in a fancied description of the

laying of the foundation of St. John's, Chester, writes thus: "First there were Ethelred and Ethelfleda, the joint founders—near them might stand their Royal Ward, Athelstan, the Etheling, heir to his father's throne. Prominent among the group would be Plegmund, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a native of Mercia, and but a few years before a modest recluse at the hermitage in that island of Chester." We cannot give a detailed account of Plegmund's episcopate, which lasted for twenty-four years; but we are sure that, as he assisted his royal master when at his Court and before he became Archbishop in promoting learning amongst his people, so in the higher position and with the larger opportunities he must have done the like. Himself a student, he knew the advantages of learning, and would be anxious to make them as widespread as possible.

Alfred is looked upon as the founder of the University of Oxford, or of University College, its first hall, and we can understand how in that work, in the conception as well as in the performance of it, the advice and counsel of his own tutor, Plegmund, would be most valuable. During his pontificate the West Saxon Episcopate was sub-divided, and the number of sees thereby increased, a clear indication of his vigorous and strenuous rule. In 909 on the same day no fewer than seven bishops were consecrated by Plegmund, three of them for newly-founded sees, and one of these for the extreme west in Devonshire. This was for Kirton, identified as Crediton, and it is interesting to note that the millenary of the consecration of Eadulf as the first bishop of Crediton has just been celebrated at that place. On that occasion the Bishop of Bristol (Dr. G. F. Browne), who is an eminent historian, gave a most instructive address, referring specially to the work of Plegmund, and to an earlier Saint connected with Crediton, S. Boniface. It was probably owing to that connection that Crediton was chosen as the seat of the Bishops of Devonshire, a position it retained for more than a hundred and fifty years. The Archbishop of Canterbury was also present on the occasion, and

expressed the hope that the work they were doing now, the things they were now starting, and the works they were taking in hand, might give as good cause to people a thousand years hence to thank God and take courage, as was given a thousand years ago to them by Plegmund and the seven Bishops of whom they had heard that day. Plegmund died on July 23, 914, and was buried in the Cathedral of Canterbury. No likeness of him has been left, not even on the coins which bear his name. His life in Cheshire must have been singularly quiet, and yet we cannot doubt that he was thereby nerved and braced for the battle of life, and fitted for the arduous duties of the high position to which he was afterwards called.

Allusion has been made to St. Plegmund's Well. It is interesting to know that whilst it bore this title in very early deeds, it has for generations been designated "the Christening Well," as the water for the Font for Holy Baptism was drawn from it. Moreover, in the old churchwardens' accounts of the parish, mention is made of an annual payment made to the clerk for cleaning out this well, and keeping it free from weeds. There was some danger of the well being overlooked, as it is very much overhung by bushes in the hedge at the back of it. The original stone work at the side and bottom had decayed. In the autumn of 1908 a new curb and back were erected at the expense of Mr Osborne Aldis, and dedicated on November 10th, when a goodly congregation assembled, and after a short service in the church, when the story of St. Plegmund was unfolded, proceeded to the well where the dedicatory prayers were said. On the stone-work the following couplet is carved:—

"Hic fons Plegmundi functus baptismatis usu
Regnante Alfredo tunc hodieque solet."

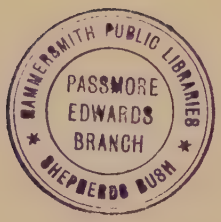
This may be freely translated as follows:—

"Here as in days when Alfred erst was king
Baptismal water flows from Plegmund's spring."

It is hoped that by this restoration of the well the memory

of S. Plegmund may be preserved: and it is not improbable that the ceremony of dressing the well, not uncommon in the adjoining county of Derbyshire, may be adopted as a village festival on July 23rd, the day of St. Plegmund's death.

Note.—The preceding chapter embodies the substance of two papers by the same writer, read before Meetings of the Chester and North Wales Archæological and Historic Society.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INDEX

ABBESS of Ely, St. Etheldreda, 266
Abbey, Birkenhead, 14, 34, 36
—— Combermere, 14, 34, 35
—— Mobberley, 14, 34
—— Norton, 14, 34
—— Pulton, 14, 35
—— Runcorn, 14
—— Stanlaw, 14, 34
—— St. Werburgh's, 9–13, 33, 34, 38–48
—— Vale Royal, 14, 34, 35
Abbot's Well, 260
Academy of Armoury, The, 136, 137
Account of the Rolls of the Honour of Halton, An, 107
Acton Church, 16
—— Lord, 18
Adlington, 200
—— Hall, 16, 84, 94
Aganippe's Well, 260
Alderley Edge, Celtic legend, 252
—— —— farmhouse, 94
Aldford Castle, 51, 52
Alfred the Great, 272
Almshouses in Commonhall Lane, Chester, 86, 87
Alvanley, fire-worship at, 261
Ancient poaching, 108
—— timber houses at—Adlington, 200; Baguley, 200; Bramhall, 200; Little Moreton, 200
Anselm, St., 8, 269
Anti-Christ, a Mystery Play, 163
Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Plegmund, 273
—— of York, Thomas Savage, 14
Architecture of Cheshire, half timbered, 80–99
Arley Hall, 198
Arneway, author of Mystery Plays, 148
"Articles of Surrender," Chester, 186
Ashley Hall, 197
Assumption, The, a Mystery Play, 160, 163
Aston, Sir Arthur, 119
—— Sir Thomas, 119
Audley and the Welsh raids, James, Lord, 10
—— James, Lord, 115
—— Lord, 13
Author of Mystery Plays—Arneway, 148; Ralf Higden, 147

BEBINGTON Cross, 211
Baddiley Church, 67
Baguley, or Baggily Hall, 85–89, 200
Bakers' Charter, Chester, 147
Ballads, 259
"Banes" or "Banns" of Mystery Plays, 153, 154–160
Bangor Monachorum, 220
—— Monastery of, 4
Baptistery, Italian font in St. Werburgh's, 45
Barlow, T. Worthington, 131
Barnston, Roger, 226
—— William, 225
Barons of Cheshire, 8, 22
—— wars, 11
Barron, Dr. John, 122
Barthomley Church, 16
—— —— alabaster effigy in, 116
Battle of Chester, 12, 220
—— of Rowton Heath, 74, 184, 190, 191
—— at Nantwich, 9
"Bear and Billet, The," Chester, 97
Bell, Congleton, 254
—— custom, Nantwich, 254
—— Fordsham Church, 254
—— "Pancake," 254
Bells, some Cheshire, 254
Bellin, George, parish clerk, 150

Beeston Castle, 16, 51, 55, 182, 186, 194
—— Sir George, 117
Bidston Court, 99
"Billy Hobby's Well," 260
Bird sayings, 255
Birkenhead Abbey, 14, 34–36
—— Henry, 124
—— Sir John, 123
Birket House, 16
Bishop Edward Stanley, 122
—— Heber, 121
—— of Bangor and Chester, Dr. Hugh Bellot, 121
—— of Chester, John Bridgeman, 101
—— Lloyd's Palace, 75, 97
—— Rider, 121
—— Wilson, 121
Bishops, Cheshire, 121–122
Bishopric of Chester, 14
Blackfriars, Chester, 48
"Blessing of the Brine," 261
Blore Heath, 13
Blundeville, Earl Randle, 23
Bohun, Earl Ranulph, 11
Bonewaldesthorne's Tower, 73
Booth, Colonel, 186
—— family of Dunham Massey, 116
—— Henry, Earl of Warrington and Baron Delamere, 120
—— of Twamlowe, John, 129
—— Sir George, 119
—— Sir John, 197
—— Sir Robert, 116
—— Sir Thomas, 119
Boundary Crosses, 208
Bow Stones Cross, 212
Bradshaw, Henry, regicide, 129
—— —— Monk of St. Werburgh's, 264
Bramall Hall, 84, 89, 90
Bramhall, 200
Bravery of Cheshire men, 13
Brereton, 200
—— legend, 253
—— Lord, 118, 128
—— Sir William, 117, 181, 183, 186
Brerewood, Edward, 127
Bridge, Farndon, 221
—— Gate, Chester, 72
Bridgewater, Duke of, 204
Bromborough Cross, 210, 212
Bromhal family, 91
Brooke family, 198
—— of Mere, family of, 63
Broome, Dr., the poet, 124, 204
Broughton Ford, 184, 186
Brownswerd, John, 123
Broxton Old Hall, 95, 96
Bruera Church, 68
Building, Elizabethan, 88
Bunbury, 16
—— alabaster tomb, 116
Burghall, Rev. Edward, 131
Burney on miracle plays, Miss Fanny, 144
Byron, Lord, 182, 186
—— Sir Nicholas, 181

CAER-LEON, 4
Calveley, Sir Hugh, 116
Camden's description of Cheshire, 32
Canterbury, St. Plegmund, Archbishop of, 273
Carden Hall, 16, 95
Castle Aldford, 51–52
—— Beeston, 16, 51, 55, 182, 186, 194
—— Chester, 57, 60
—— Doddington, 16
—— Dodleston, 51–52
—— Dunham Massey, 51, 53
—— Frodsham, 51, 53
—— Halton, 9, 51, 54, 106
—— Hawarden, 182
—— Holt, 222
—— Maiden, 51, 52
—— Malpas, 9, 51, 52
—— Nantwich, 51, 52
—— Newhall, 51, 52
—— Northwich, 51, 53
—— Oldcastle, 51, 52
—— Peckforton, 196
—— Pulford, 51, 52
—— Rhuddlan, 24
—— Rocksavage, 51, 54
—— Runcorn 51, 53
—— Shocklach, 9, 51, 52
—— Thelwall, 51
Catesthorn legend, 253
Cathedral, chapter-house of, 43
—— *Misereres* in, 41
Celtic legend, 252
—— place-names, 7
Cenred, St. Werburgh's brother, 267
Chadkirk Chapel, 67

Chains, hanging in, 110
Chaloner of Chester, Thomas, 133
Chamberlain of Chester, 30
Chancellors, Cheshire judges and, 124–127
Chapel, High Leigh, 67
Chapter-house of Cathedral, 43
Charles I. at Chester, 181
Charm for warts, rushes a, 239
Cheshire a land of saints, 4
—— Prince Maurice and Prince Rupert in, 184
—— "Rounds," 257
—— Saints, two, 264–276
—— Sanctuaries, 220
—— Saxons in, 5
Chesshyre, Sir John, 203
Chester, almshouses in Commonhall Lane, 86, 87
—— "Articles of Surrender," 186
—— Battle of, 12, 220
—— Bishopric of, 14
—— Castle, 57–60
—— Chamberlain of, 30
—— Chief-Justiceship of, 29
—— City plate melted down, 182
—— Duke of Monmouth at, 17
—— Earldom of, 8
—— Ethelfrid attacks, 5
—— Ethelred, founder of monastery at, 266
—— Gateways of, 71
—— Bridge Gate, 72
—— East Gate, 72
—— Kale Yard Gate, 72
—— New Gate, 72
—— North Gate, 72, 73
—— Ship Gate, 72
—— Water Gate, 72
—— Handel at, 259
—— High Cross, 188, 208, 209
—— James II. at, 17
—— John Bridgeman, Bishop of, 101
—— King Edgar at, 7
—— King Egbert at, 5
—— King John at, 9
—— martyr, George Marsh, 15
—— Musical Festivals, 260
—— Phœnix Tower, 74, 184
—— Prince Maurice at, 183
—— Races, 74
—— Records of, 31
—— Roman, 70, 77
—— Roman legions at, 3
—— Roman wall of, 4
Chester, Roman work, 71
—— St. Bridget's Church, 69
—— St. Martin's ,, 68
—— St. Michael's ,, 69
—— St. Olave's ,, 69
—— St. Peter's ,, 68
—— seventeenth century house in Whitefriars, 99
—— Siege of, 180–193
—— Sir Nicholas Byron, Governor of, 181
—— the key to Wales, 21
—— Trade Guilds at, 151
Chestnut, a "coppity-co," 256
"Chief of men," 2, 32, 203
Chief-Justiceship of Chester, 29
Cholmondeley, 195
—— family, 202, 262
—— Hall, 16
—— Lady Mary, 199
Christleton, 183
—— Rush-bearing, 239
Church, alabaster effigy in Barthomley, 116
—— bell, Frodsham, 254
—— Bunbury, 116, 117
—— Farndon, 223
—— of St. John, Chester, 14
—— of St. Oswald, 41
Churches, music in, 259
—— timber-framed, 61–69
Churchyard crosses, 208, 210, 211
Circuits, judicial, 27
Civil war in Cheshire, 16
Clarke, Dr. Samuel, 122
Clulow Cross, 212
Combermere Abbey, 14, 34, 35
—— Field-Marshal, 203
—— legend, 253
Commonhall Lane, Chester, almshouses in, 86, 87
Congleton bell, 254
Constable de Lacy, 24
Copyhold tenure, Manor of Halton, 113
Cornage, 244–246
Corpus Christi, feast of, 147
—— procession, 161
Corvysors' Playe, The, 164, 165
Costume of players, 145
"Counting-out" rhymes, 257
County Flint, 25
—— Hall, Chester, 30
—— Palatine of Chester, 1, 19–32

Court, Bidston, 99
—— Leet, Halton, 106–113
—— of Exchequer, Chester, 31
—— Old Consistory, 100
Creation and Fall, a Mystery Play, 145
Crewe, 195, 200
—— Hall, 16
—— Randolph, 124
—— Thomas, 124
Crewes, 204
Cross at St. John the Baptist, Chester, 210
—— at St. Mary's-on-the-Hill, Chester, 209, 212
—— Bebington, 211
—— Bow Stones, 212
—— Bromborough, 210, 212
—— Clulow, 212
—— Disley, 210
—— Eaton, 213
—— High, Chester, 208, 209
—— Lymm, 213
—— Macclesfield market, 213
—— Neston, 210
—— Over Peover, 212
—— Shocklach, 211
—— Wallasey, 211
—— West Kirby, 210
Crosses, boundary, 208
—— churchyard, 208, 210, 211
—— destroyed, 209
—— "High," 208
—— Ludworth, 212
—— Macclesfield Public Park, 212
—— Market, 208, 212, 213
—— preaching, 207, 210
—— Sandbach, 213–217
—— weeping, 208
Croughton Hall, 16
Crucifixion, The, a Mystery Play, 166
"Crypt, ye Olde," 78
"Curfew," 254
Curse, Old Mab's, 262
Customs, some Cheshire, 230–263

DANCE, morris, 258
Danes, 6
Danish place-names, 6
Danyer, Sir Thomas, 114
Davenport family, 91
—— of Davenport, family of, 246
—— Sir Humphrey, 126
—— Sir John, 63
Davenports, 204
Delamere, 69
—— Baron, 197
—— Forest, 74, 82, 245
—— *Horn, The*, 245
—— House, 199
—— Lord, 18, 199
—— of Dunham Massey, Baron, 119
Delves at Poictiers, Sir John, 115
—— Sir John, 13
Dernhall, 14
Description of Cheshire, Camden's, 32
Diary, Slingsby's, 192
Dieulacres, 14
Disley Cross, 210
Dissolution of monasteries, 14, 33
Doddington, 95, 115, 200
—— Castle, 16
Dodleston Castle, 51, 52
Dog-whipper and sluggard-waker, 256
Done of Utkinton, family of, 245
—— Sir John, 13, 199
Dorfold, 200
—— Hall, 16
"Dot," a children's game, 256
Downes of Sutton Downes and Taxal, family of, 246
Dragon legend, 252
Drayton's Lamentation, 13
Dukinfield of Dukinfield, Colonel Robert, 118
Dunham Hall, or Dunham Massey, 196
—— Massey Castle, 51, 53
Dutton of Dutton, 24, 115
—— Sir Thomas, 13

"EAGLE and Child" Inn, 94
Earldom of Chester, 8
Earl of Chester, Prince Edward, 25
Earnshaw, Lawrence, 128
East Gate, Chester, 72
—— Hall, High Leigh, 197
Eaton, 195
—— Cross, 213
Eccleston Church, 68
Edgar at Chester, King, 7, 74
Edisbury, 7
Edward I., 10
—— the Elder, died at Farndon, 220
Effigies at Farndon, 224

Effigy of Sir Robert Foulshurst, alabaster, 116
Egbert at Chester, King, 5
Egerton family, 202
—— Lord, 197
—— Sir John, 13
—— Sir Philip, geologist, 204
Egerton-Warburton, Rowland Eyles, 205, 206
Ellesmere, Lord Chancellor, 125
Elizabethan building, 88
England, Sword-bearer of, 21
—— the Vale Royal of, 130
Ætheldred, Ealdorman, 7
Etheldreda, St., Abbess of Ely, 266
Ethelfleda, 7, 71
—— rebuilt Chester Castle, 59
Ethelfrid attacks Chester, 5
Ethelred, founder of monastery at Chester,
Exchequer, Court of, Chester, 31

"FALCON," the, Chester, 97
Falconer, Dr. William, 129
Families, Cheshire, 194–206
Family, Bromhal, 91
—— Brooke, 198
—— Cholmondeley, 202, 262
—— Davenport, 91
—— Egerton, 202
—— Grosvenor, 202
—— Hyde, 205
—— Legh, 197
—— Mainwaring, 199, 202
—— Marbury, 198
—— Massey, 196
—— of Brooke of Mere, 63
—— of Davenport of Davenport, 246
—— of Done of Utkinton, 245
—— of Downes of Sutton Downes and Taxal, 246
—— of Dunham Massey, Booth, 116
—— of Holmes, 133
—— of Shakerleys of Hulme, 63
—— Warburton, 198
—— Wilbraham, 199
Farndon Bridge, 221
—— Church, 223
—— Edward the Elder died at, 220
—— effigies at, 224
—— parish books, 224
—— *Rush-bearing Sunday at*, 225, 238
—— stained glass at, 223
Farnworth Leet, Widnes or, 112
Feast of Corpus Christi, 147
Festivals, Chester Musical, 260
Fire-worship at Alvanley, 261
Fitton, Sir Edward, 126
Flint, county, 25
Folk-lore, Cheshire, 230–263
Font at Warburton, 66
—— Marton, 65
—— of Italian origin in baptistery, Chester, 45
Football at Chester, 74
Forest, Delamere, 74, 82, 245
—— of Macclesfield, 82, 246
—— of Wirral, 82, 246
Forests of Cheshire, 69, 82
Foulshurst of Crewe, Sir Robert, 13, 115, 116
Freeman quoted, Professor, 21, 27
"Free-Masons," 139
Frodsham, 51, 53
—— Church bell, 254
—— "Synagogue Well," 260

GAMES, children's, 256–257
—— unlawful, 107
Gamul of Buerton, Sir Francis, 119, 184, 190
Gateways of Chester, 71
Gawsworth Hall, 94
Gayton, wishing well at, 260
Gerard, Lord, 191
Gerarde, John, 127
"Glorious Sixth of May," song, 260
"God's Providence House," 75, 97
"Golden Phœnix," 135
Goosetrey Church, 68
Governor of Chester, 181
Grammar Schools, Cheshire, 123
Great Broughton burnt down, 183
—— Budworth, 61
—— Meols, 3
Greyfriars, Chester, 48
Grosvenor family, 202
—— Roger, ancestor of the Dukes of Westminster, 119

HALF-TIMBERED architecture of Cheshire, 80–99
Hall, Adlington, 16, 84, 94
—— Arley, 198
—— Ashley, 197
—— Baguley or Baggily, 85–89, 200
—— Bramall, 84, 89, 90

Hall, Broxton Old, 95, 96
—— Carden, 16, 95
—— Cholmondeley, 16
—— County, 30
—— Crewe, 16
—— Croughton, 16
—— Dorfold, 16
—— Dunham, or Dunham Massey, 196
—— East, High Leigh, 197
—— Gawsworth, 94
—— Handforth, 94
—— Hooton, 95
—— Huxley, 16
—— Little Moreton, 84, 91, 92, 93
—— Marbury, 198
—— Mere, 198
—— Peover, 199
—— Rostherne, 197
—— Tabley, 198
—— Tatton, 197
—— Toft, 199
—— Utkinton, 199
—— West, High Leigh, 197
Halton, An Account of the Rolls of the Honour of, 107
Halton Castle, 9, 51, 54, 106
Handbridge, 182
Handel at Chester, 259
Handforth Hall, 94
Hanging at Halton, 109
—— in chains, 110
Harden, moated house at, 200
Harvest Home, 243
Hawarden Castle, 182
Hawkeston of Wrine Hall, 115
Hawkstone, Sir John, 13
Heralds' College, 137
Hiding holes, Moreton Hall, 92
Higden, Ralf, author of Mystery Plays, 46, 147
High Cross, Chester, 188, 208, 209
"High Crosses," 208
High Leigh, 197
—— —— Chapel, 67
Hill, Peckforton, 194, 195
Historians, Cheshire, 129, 132
Histories of Lot and Abraham, a Mystery Play, 163
Holme, family of, 133
—— of Chester, William, 133
—— Randle (I.), 134, 187
—— —— (II.), 134, 135
—— —— (III.), 136, 139
—— —— (IV.), 140, 141
Holt Castle, 222
—— Roman remains at, 218
Hooton Hall, 95
Horn, The Delamere, 245
—— *The Wirral*, 244
Horse hodening at Northwich, 235
—— —— at Tarporley, 235
Hospital of St. John, Chester, 36, 73
House, Birket, 16
—— Delamere, 199
"House, God's Providence," 75, 97
Hoylake, 18
Hulse, Dr. John, 122
Hunting parson, a, 108
Huxley Hall, 16, 200
Hyde family, 205

INCE Grange, 46
Incursions of the Welsh, 9
Italian font in baptistery, 45

JACOBITES of Cheshire, 197
Jacob's Well, 260
James II. at Chester, 17
John at Chester, King, 9
Judges and Chancellors, Cheshire, 124–127
Judicial circuits, 27
—— seals, 28

KALE Yard Gate, Chester, 72
Kenyon, Lord, 126
King, Daniel, 130
King Robert of Sicily, a Mystery Play, 163
Kingdom, Mercian, 5
Knowles, Sir Robert, 116
"Knowles's Mitres," 116
Knutsford, 196
—— May Queen, 242
—— morris dance at, 258

LACY, Constable de, 24
"Lamb, The," 138, 139
Langdale, Sir Marmaduke, 184
Leet, Halton Court, 106–113
—— Widnes or Farnworth, 112
Legend, Brereton, 253
—— Capesthorn, 253
—— Celtic, 252

Legend, Combermere, 253
—— dragon, 252
—— Rostherne Mere, 253
Legh family, 12, 197, 204
—— of Booths, Sir John, 13
—— of Macclesfield, Sir Piers, 13, 115
—— Sir Uryan, 117
Leighs of Lyme, 13
Legions at Chester, Roman, 3
Leycester, Ralph, 199
—— Sir Peter, 130, 198
Lifting, 242–243
Little Moreton Hall, 84, 91, 92, 93, 200
Llewellyn, Prince, 10
Lord of the Manor of Halton, the King, 106
Ludworth crosses, 212
Lupus, Hugh, 8, 21, 106, 202, 269
Lyme, 200
Lymm Cross, 213

MACCLESFIELD Forest, 82, 246
—— Market Cross, 213
—— Public Park crosses, 212
'Magpie" architecture, 80
Maiden Castle, 51, 52
Mainwaring family, 199, 202
Malpas, 16
—— Castle, 9, 51, 52
Manners of Cheshire people, 20
Marbury family, 198
—— Hall, 198
Market crosses, 208, 212, 213
Marling, 237–238
Marton church, 63
—— font, 65
Martyr, George Marsh, Chester, 15
Massey, Colonel Edward, 118
—— family, 196
Masseys, 204
—— of Coddington, 118, 197
Maying, 241–242
Maynwaring of Over Peover, Sir Thomas, 130
May Queen, Knutsford, 242
Mercian Kingdom, 5
Mere Hall, 198
Middlewich, 182
Milton, 124
Miracle Plays, Chester, 74, 77
Misereres in Cathedral, 41
Moated houses at Harden, 200
—— —— at Huxley, 200
—— —— at Moreton, 200
Mobberley Abbey, 14, 34
Molineux, Sir Richard, 13
Molyneux, Lord, 18
—— Samuel, 127
Monasteries, dissolution of, 14, 33
Monastery at Chester, Ethelred founder of, 266
—— of Bangor, 4
Monk of St. Werburgh's, Henry Bradshaw, 264
Monmouth at Chester, Duke of, 17
Moreton, moated house at, 200
Morgan's Mount, Chester, 73
Morris dance, Knutsford, 258
Mostyn of Mostyn, Sir Roger, 120
Mottram-in-Longdendale, 128
Mumming play, 240
Music, 257–258
Music in churches, 259
Musical Festivals, Chester, 260
Mynshal, Elizabeth, 124
Mystery Plays, Chester, 142–179

NANTWICH, 16, 183, 261
—— battle at, 9
—— bell custom, 254
—— Castle, 51, 52
Neild, James, philanthropist, 204
Neston Cross, 210
Nether-Legh, 16
Nether or Lower Peover Church, 61
New Gate, Chester, 72
Newhall Castle, 51, 52
Nixon, Robert, Cheshire prophet, 261
Noah's Ark, a Mystery Play, 144, 164, 166
"Nogging-work," 99
"No Popery" riot, 17
Norman Earls of Chester, 22
North Gate, Chester, 72, 73
Northwich, 51, 53
—— horse hodening at, 235
—— Winnington Bridge, near, 17
Norton Abbey, 14, 34
Nunnery, Chester, St. Mary's, 34, 36

OLDCASTLE Castle, 51, 52
Old Consistory Court, 100

"Old King's Head," 134
Old Mab's Curse, 262
Origin of Mystery Plays, 146
Oulton, 200
Over Peover Cross, 212

PACE-EGGING, 239–240
"Pageant carriages," 151
"Palace, Bishop Lloyd's," 75, 97
Palace, Stanley, 97
"Pancake" bell, 254
Parish books at Farndon, 224
Parson, a hunting, 108
Passion, The, a Mystery Play, 165
Peckforton Castle, 196
—— Hill, 194, 195
Pemberton's Parlour, Chester, 73, 181
Pentice, the, 208
People, manners of Cheshire, 20
Peover Hall, 199
Phœnix Tower, Chester, 74, 184
Place in history of County Palatine of Chester, 19–32
Place-names, Celtic, 7
Place-names, Danish, 6
Plate melted down, Chester City, 182
"Players' victory," the, 24
Plays, Miracle, 74, 77
Plemstall (Plegmundstall), 271
Poaching, ancient, 108
Poets, Cheshire, 123, 124
Polychronicon, 46, 147
"Post and panel" work, 80, 84
Powdered alabaster as a cure for sheep, 262
Preaching crosses, 207, 210
Prestbury, 65
—— priest's house at, 94
Prince Maurice at Chester, 183
—— —— and Prince Rupert in Cheshire, 184
Princeps Cestriæ, 1, 12
Principality, Cheshire a, 1
Priory, Birkenhead, 14, 34, 36
—— Norton, 14, 34
—— Runcorn, 14
Procession, Corpus Christi, 161
Prophecies, a Mystery Play, 163
Prothonotary, the, 30
Proverbs, some Cheshire, 246–252
Pulford Castle, 51–52
Pulton Abbey, 14, 35

RACES, Chester, 74
Ranulph III., Earl of Chester, 11
Records of Chester, 31
Resurrection, a Mystery Play, 150, 167
Reverence shown in old plays, 143
Rhuddlan, Castle of, 24
"Rhudland, Statute of," 26
Rhymes, "counting-out," 257
Richard II., Cheshire men bodyguard of, 12
Ridley, 117
Riot, "No Popery," 17
Rocksavage, 51, 54
Rode, Wilbrahams of, 203
Roman Chester, 70–77
—— legions at Chester, 3
—— remains, 3
—— —— at Holt, 218
—— wall of Chester, 4
—— work, Chester, 71
Roodeye, Chester, 74
Rostherne Hall, 197
—— Mere legend, 253
"Rounds, Cheshire," 257
Rows of Chester, 75–79
Rowton Heath, 16
—— —— battle of, 74, 119, 184, 190, 191
Runcorn, 7
—— Abbey, 14
—— Castle, 51, 53
Rush-bearing, 238–239
—— at Christleton, 239
—— Sunday at Farndon, 225, 238
Rushes a charm for warts, 239

Sacrifice of Isaac, a Mystery Play, 148
Saighton Grange, 46
St. Bridget's Church, Chester, 69
St. Ethelreda, 266
St. Giles' Well, 260
St. John, Chester, Hospital of, 36, 73
—— the Baptist, Chester, Cross at, 210
St. Martin's Church, Chester, 68
St. Mary's Nunnery, Chester, 34, 36
St. Mary's-on-the-Hill, Chester, Cross at, 209, 212

St. Michael's Church, Chester, 69
St. Olave's Church, Chester, 69
St. Oswald, Church of, 41
St. Plegmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, 273
St. Plegmund's Well, 260, 275
St. Peter's Church, Chester, 68
St. Werburgh, remains of, 38
—— shrine of, 42
St. Werburgh's Abbey, 9–13, 33, 34, 38–48
—— Henry Bradshaw, monk of, 264
Saints, Cheshire a land of, 4
Saltney Marsh, 9
Salmon story, a, 263
Sanctuary, Cheshire, 220
Sandbach Crosses, 213–217
Savage, Archbishop of York, Thomas, 14
—— Sir Edmund, 13
Saxons in Cheshire, 5
Schomberg, Duke, 18
Scientists, Cheshire, 127–129
Seals, judicial, 28
"Sewer," an office, 136
Shakerley, Colonel, 190
—— Sir Geoffrey, 120
Shakerleys of Hulme, family of, 63
Shepherd's Play, The, a Mystery Play, 149
Ship Gate, Chester, 72
Shire Hall at Chester Castle, 60
Shocklach Castle, 9, 51, 52
—— Cross, 211
Siddington Church, 65
Slingsby's Diary, 192
Sluggard-waker and dog-whipper, 256
Soldiers of Cheshire, 114–120
Souling, 230–237
Speed, John, 1, 138, 226
Stained glass at Farndon, 223
Stanley, Dean, 204
—— Palace, 97
—— Sir William, 117
Stanlaw Abbey, 14, 34
"Statute of Rhudland," 26
Stockport, 16
Stocks, punishment of the, 112
Sutton Grange, 46
—— Sir Richard, 131
Sword-bearer of England, 21
"Synagogue Well," Frodsham, 260

TABLEY Hall, 198
—— Lord de, poet, 204
Taft Hall, 199
Tarporley, horse hodening at, 235
Tarvin, 16
Tatton Hall, 197
Taxal, 69
Thelwall Castle, 51
Thingwall, 7
Three Kings, The, a pageant, 149, 170–178
Timber-framed churches, 61–69
Tower, Bonewaldesthorne's, 73
—— Phœnix, Chester, 74, 184
Trade Gilds at Chester, 151
"Trades and Mysteries," 24
Tranmere, 133
Troutbeck, Sir William, 13

UNLAWFUL games, 107
Utkinton Hall, 199

VALE Royal, 199
—— —— Abbey, 14, 34, 35
—— —— *of England, The*, 130
Venables, Sir Hugh, 13
Victory, "The Players'," 24

WALES, Chester the key to, 21
Wallasey Cross, 211
—— Leaseowes, 18
Wall of Chester, Roman, 4
Walls and Rows, Chester, 70–77
Warburton Church, 66, 270
—— family, 198
—— font, 66
War in Cheshire, Civil, 16
Warts, rushes a charm for, 239
Water Gate, Chester, 72
"Wattle and daub," 83
Weeping Crosses, 208
"Well, Billy Hobby's," 260
Well-dressing, 261
"Well, Synagogue," 260
Wells, Wishing, 260
Welsh, incursion of the, 9
—— raids, James, Lord Audley, and the, 10
Werden, General, 120
West Hall, High Leigh, 197
—— Kirby Cross, 210
Whiltenshaw, 118
Whipping-post, Widnes, 112

Whitefriars, Chester, 48
—— seventeenth century house in Chester, 99
Whitehurst, John, clockmaker, 128
Whitney, Geoffrey, 123
—— George, 205
Widnes or Farnworth Leet, 112
Wilbraham family, 199
—— George, 204
Wilbrahams of Rode, 203
Williams, Chief Justice, 126
Williamson, Dr., 226
Winnington Bridge, near Northwich, 17
Wirral, 94, 95
—— forest, 82
—— *Horn, The*, 244
Wishing Wells, 260
Woman fighting, a, 108
Woodchurch, 69
Work, "post and panel," 80
Worthies, Cheshire, 114–132
Wulfhere, King of Mercia, 264

"Ye Olde Crypt," 78
York, Thomas Savage, Archbishop of, 14

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